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by LESLIE T. WHITE

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NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY ..... STATE.....

JUNE ISSUE ON SALE MAY 9th

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 105, No. 1 for May, 1941 Best of New Stories

East of the Williwaw (1st part of 4) . . . . . LESLIE T. WHITE 8
"What kind of a land do you think this is, young man? It's the survival of the fittest, south of the bottom of the world and north of old Cape Stiff!" That was Jeff Wynn's introduction to his new inheritance in the Land of Fire when Maté Cocido, the gaucho, and his gulfer band, galloped up to the *estancia* with weapons drawn.

Mosshorn Law . . . . . KENNETH PERKINS 31
Old Colorado thought he'd been too soft, letting the Bronco Kid escape —till he discovered men hadn't changed much in the Coyotero badlands since the days of the hell-to-spit hard-riders.

Attention to Orders . . . . . R. W. DALY 38

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Death in the Everglades (a fact story) . . . OLIVER HAZARD PERRY 53
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The Enlistment of Joe Lightning (a novelette) . LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH 60
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Freeze and Be Damned! (conclusion) . . . . ROBERT ORMOND CASE 86
Ravenhill passes the dice to Connolly and lets the kid roll 'em for a fortune in platinum. Why not? All Riv really wanted at this stage of the game was a stiff drink—and let the laurels fall where they will!

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Cover by Malvin Singer

Headings by Gordon Grant, Hamilton Greene, I. B. Hazelton, Charles De Feo and John Clymer

Kenneth S. White, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary; Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Subscription Dept., 205 East 42nd St., New York, N. Y.
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"FLAMES DROVE US INTO THE INKY SEA!"

A true experience of WILLIAM H. CRANE, *West Columbia, Texas*

"A TERRIFIC EXPLOSION rocked the boat on which we were riding out to an oil drilling rig in Galveston Bay," writes Mr. Crane. "Instantly, the six of us—a drilling crew and the skipper of our craft—were surrounded by flames.

"FIGHTING THE FIRE was hopeless. As tongues of flame seared us, we strapped on lifebelts. Our driller grabbed a flashlight. Then we hurled ourselves overboard into the black water.

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(Signed) William H. Crane"

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

My nephew, Howard Mayes, Jr., was taken away from 2244 Cove Ave., Los Angeles, by his father in March, 1921. He will be of draft age Sept. 30th, 1941. His father read *Adventure*, and maybe *he* will see this urgent plea to get in touch with his invalid mother. She is still at the little house on Cove Ave. His father is a Ford mechanic and was seen in Detroit and New York a few years ago. Please get in touch with me care of *Adventure* if you do not want to contact your mother direct.—Frank R. Smith, 301 - 81 st. Brooklyn, N. Y.

Harry Eugene Cunningham was born in Minneapolis, Kans. on Oct. 5, 1901. In the same month we left for Colorado, arriving in Denver early in 1902. In February or March, 1905, his father, Frank E. Cunningham, took him with his grandmother and left. I have tried many ways to find him. At three, he was large for his age, had red hair and blue eyes. I will reward anyone who brings my son and me together. Emma M. Cunningham Bewley, 811 W. 62 St., Los Angeles, Cal.

My brother, Richard Peyton Symmes, has been missing since 1918. He was last heard from at Peru, Kans., and was living with Mr. and Mrs. Perry Miley, who were farming in that neighborhood. He was born and raised in Topeka, Kans. His age is 32. His mother's present name is Mrs. May Wyer, and she has tried many ways to locate him, with no success. Harry J. Symmes, c/o Mrs. May Wyer, 933 Paseo, Kansas City, Mo.

Roland Harder, formerly of Co. 'C', 27th Inf., Hawaii, last heard of in Johnsville, Cal. Probably in or near a California mining town. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please communicate with Chas. L. McFadden, 1320 South Carmelina, West Los Angeles, Cal.

Would like to hear from the descendants of Bill Hogan of Rockingham Co., Virginia, and James Hogan whose farm was at the mouth of Hickman Creek, Ky. Also would like information about Clinton J. True, who was Colonel of Inf. 40th Reg., mustered at Grayson, Carter Co., Ky. Also Henery or Henry E. Ware, 1st Lt. of Co. E, 9th Reg. of Ky. Please write Robert E. Ware, Clemson College, S. C.

I would like to hear from my old friend, Percy Wells. I last saw him in North Yokama, Wash. We roomed in the same hotel, hunted and shot target together. That was in the fall and winter of 1909. Percy Wells, if you are in the land of the living, write to your old friend, Chas. B. Baker, R.F.D. 2, New Kensington, Pa.

Joseph F. Leclaire, formerly of Fitchburg, Mass., if in the West, kindly get in touch with Phil Rockwood, 571 - 11 St., Oakland, Cal.

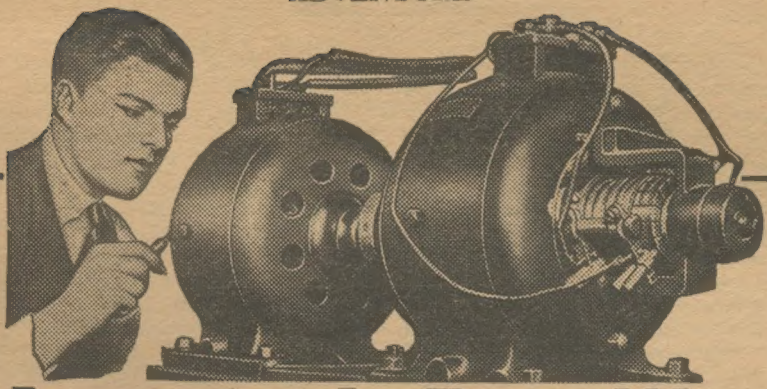
Any information leading to the whereabouts of Frank Kelley Robinson will be appreciated. When last heard from in October, 1938, he was in Detroit, Mich. He is 30 years old, about five feet five inches tall, weight, about one hundred sixty. Dark brown hair and eyes. Frank, if you see this, please write to your parents. J. W. Robinson, Zolfo Springs, Fla.

Earnestly wish to locate a buddy who was my constant companion for four years of service in the United States Army: Leslie D. Smith. He left the Philippine Islands in July, 1940, was to return to his home in Wisconsin. Last heard from at Fort McDowell, California, August, 1940. Notify Dale C. Schwartz, Box 476, Jamestown, N. Dak.

Wanted information of the following: 1st Sgt. Gerald R. Driscoll, 34th Inf., whom I last saw in Maryland, 1921; Norman W. Smith, 18th Inf., whom I last saw at Ft. Wadsworth, N. Y. 1922; and Sgt. Henry M. Phillips, 34th Inf., whom I last saw in Camp Eustis, Va., 1922. Their old supply sergeant would like to hear of or from them. Leo Neace, Ava, Ill.

Would like very much to get in touch with my mother and father, whereabouts unknown.

(Continued on page 6)



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Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, the 4 weeks Radio Course and how you will finance my tuition and how I can "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

(Continued from page 4)

I have received the following information from Sparta State School:

My name was Frankie Carpenter, born March 12, 1906, in Kansas City, Mo. My mother's name was Annie Woodmase at that time. I was adopted by a Silas Brown, whereabouts unknown. A Mrs. Hill, who was then Alice Carpenter, took care of me for Mr. Brown, and when I was about five years old, she adopted me, in Kansas City, Mo.

They tell me my mother married a Gould Bailey, and at last reports, which was some time ago, lived in Chicastra, or Chickasha, Okla. If anyone knows them, I would like to contact them. Francis Henry De Voe, Box 21-636, Represa, Cal.

Information wanted about: former nurse, Anna Kincaid, attached to Greenhut's Veterans Hospital, New York, April, May, 1919, last known address Washington, D. C., originally from Beloit, Wis.; former 1st Lt. H. S. Davidowitz, Acting Chaplain, 312th Infantry, 78 Division, Camp Dix and A.E.F., last known address given in Atlantic City.

All members of Company "D," 312th Infantry, now residing in all 48 States of the Union, and Territories, interested in forming Last Man Group, reply to Robert L. Allan, 565 West 169 Street, New York, N. Y.

Would appreciate any information concerning address of my buddy, Harold Biggerstaff, who was in McKinley Park, Alaska with me during the summer of 1938. When last heard from, he lived in Vancouver, Wash. Pvt. Gerald Kessler, 34th School Sqdn., Scott Field, Ill.

Some few years ago ADVENTURE published an account of our unit, The 97th Battalion, American Legion, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Later the B. E. F.) which was formed in the fall of 1915 at Toronto, Canada, of Americans who had enlisted in the Canadian army prior to the U. S. entering the World War, and was known as the American Legion (long before the present American Legion was founded in Paris in 1919.)

We have organized an association of former members of that long forgotten battalion and are trying to get in touch with those chaps who served with it. Would request that they get in touch with our Adjutant: Thos. McLaughlin, 2111 McKinley St., Berkeley, Cal.

My brother, Arthur Coleman, was adopted out of an orphans' home in Rochester about 1895 by a family who lived across the street. I do not know the name of the home or the name of the people, but do know the orphanage stood on the southeast corner of the street, and the family's house stood on the southwest corner, in a large yard with three stone lions in the front yard.

My mother worked for someone up the street several doors to the north, but I do not know their name. My maternal grandfather's name was Harvey Johnson, but as I was quite young when my parents died, I do not know their names. My brother was born about 1888 in either Hunts Corners, N. Y. or Groveland, N. Y. Any information whatsoever about him will be appreciated by George F. Coleman, 862 Marshall Drive, Erie, Pa.

Have lost track of my brother and sister. Brother, George Schutter, last heard from at North Franklin, Conn., about 1919. Sister, Mary McGrath, née Schutter, last heard from in 1918, lived in Norwich, Conn. If anyone has heard of, or knows either, please write to Fred Schutter, 328 East 38 St., N. Y. C.

My twin brother, Donald J. Smith, 24 yrs. old, disappeared in August 1940. He is 5 ft. 11 in. tall, weighs 135 lbs., light brown hair, very crooked teeth, neither drinks nor smokes, disappeared wearing dark suit, white shirt, tie, black shoes, no hat or topcoat, no rings, wears glasses constantly—has since he was seven. Makes friends with everyone, is a jack-of-all-trades—carpenter, tractor and auto mechanic, male nursing, typing, etc. Please get in touch with Pvt. David E. Smith, Co. E, 19th Engineers, Fort Ord, Calif.

Would like to hear from the descendants or acquaintances of the family, of Hugh and Elizabeth Davis who lived in Clayton, Crawford Co., Wisc. in 1860. All or part of the family was known to have lived in Red Wing, and later, Stillwater, Minn. (between 1870 and 1884). One daughter, Ida Davis, married a man named Hunt; her second husband's name was Baker. She had three children: Minnie Hunt, and Joe and Laura Baker. Communicate with Mrs. H. M. Clark, 236 River Lane, Rockford, Ill.

Would like to hear from any descendants of Dr. Christian Seahousen Friis or Fries. Native of Denmark. Died about twenty years ago. He was my uncle. He lived in Texas somewhere near El Paso. Write T. M. Meyers, c/o ADVENTURE.

Would like to contact some of my old shipmates in regard to getting a claim through for a pension. I served on the U.S. destroyer *Burrows* #29, all through the World War, was based at Queenstown, Ireland and Brest, France. I was ship's cook, 1st class. I am at present in the Veterans' Hospital, Bronx, N. Y., and do not know how long I will be

(Continued on page 121)

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LET ME START SHOWING YOU RESULTS LIKE THESE
5 inches of new Muscle
"My arms increased 1½", chest 2½", forearm ⅞"."—C. S., W. Va.
What a difference!
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GAINED 29 POUNDS
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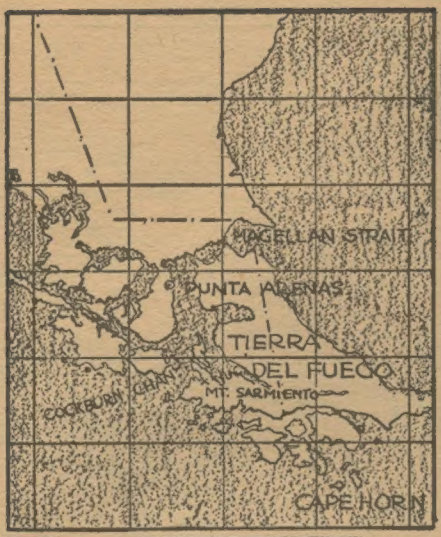


EAST OF

We were very close, and I could see the riders dismount and kneel with their carbines.

A STORY OF THE LAND OF FIRE

By LESLIE T. WHITE

THE WILLIWAW

SO THIS was the bottom of the world! Standing on the *muelle* at the southern extremity of South America, I stared gloomily at the Straits of Magellan where two albatross soared above a school of porpoise that seemed to be fleeing the fog which rolled up Famine Reach. Out in the roadstead, a Greek freighter jerked her anchor restlessly, her dirty bottom rolling to the current and her topsides checked with rust. Closer in, a half dozen cargo vessels huddled, swinging in unison to their chains like shackled convicts, yet grate-

ful for the haven of a neutral port. Two were German, and close abaft their sterns lay an English armed-merchantman; taunting plumes of steam mounted from her twin stacks, daring the freighters to escape. It was miserably cold. The fast-moving fog touched the Greek. Her fog-horn wailed. Her riding lights blinked on. I could feel for her. Across the Straits, I could still glimpse the beryl-like blue glaciers of legendary Tierra del Fuego. The cold, forbidding Land of Fire. And somewhere out beyond, wrapped in all that mist and mystery, lay my heritage. The fog blotted out the view.

I turned toward the lights of Punta Arenas.

Once again I climbed the wooden stairs to the Pilots' Station. Nymann wasn't there. Another pilot was on duty, standing stolidly before the big window, studying the weather. He turned when I heeled the door shut.

"Hola, Señor Wynn! Buenas noches!"

I said hello, and asked if he had received any word from Captain Nymann. He had. Nymann was due in any minute, but the Greek was awaiting him for pilotage to Valparaiso, so he would have to leave shortly after his arrival. Would I wait? I told him no—if Nymann had time to see me, I'd be at the Bar Corsair. I was tired of waiting, but I didn't tell him that.

The fog was swirling up the street when I went out, and the dampness penetrated my thin topcoat. I stuck to the waterfront and located the Corsair without trouble.

It was a semi-basement dive, near the coal-docks, and when I pushed open the bat-wing doors, I had to pause until my eyes accustomed themselves to the miserable light and confusion that characterizes a Latin American saloon. Tobacco smoke hung in heavy layers that shuttled back and forth with the drafts, as thick as the fog outside. Low-hung lamps planted the light in disconnected yellow patches; on the marble-topped tables where some of the patrons played cards; on the cramped, now empty dance floor; on the battered piano where a monkey of a man clawed at the keys; and over the bar itself. The drinkers sat in the shadows between. The place was well filled for such an early hour. Gauchos from the far-away pampas, sheepherders from the plateaus and miners from the hills. Those from the land. The sea contributed its share of sealers, fishermen and seamen from the merchant ships.

It seemed a tension came over the crowd when I came in, especially among the seamen. Maybe it was just curiosity. I was jumpy anyhow, and I felt conspicuous in a business suit. Obviously I was the only American in the place, and the South Americans have a habit of staring anyhow. I walked between the tables to the bar. The bar-keep took a swipe at the mahogany with a damp rag and waited.

I said, *"Cerveza!"* because it was the only drink I could order in Spanish.

The beer came up without a head and lukewarm. The tall gaucho on my right looked me over carefully. His black, flat-crowned hat was sweaty and frosted with fine dust. He wore the wide-flowing pants they call *bombachas*, and from his wrist dangled a murderous, silver-mounted quirt. He exuded a strong, meaty smell as though he had just brought in a herd of cattle from the back country of Patagonia. The pair of Scandinavians on the other side of me were whalers, judging from the stench of blubber.

But the man I had come to meet was not present.

I was disappointed, but not surprised. It had been like that ever since my arrival at this obscure, almost-forgotten end of the earth four days ago. Time means absolutely nothing to the native of South America. A day, a week, a month—it's all the same. *Mañana.* Always tomorrow. You can't do anything about it. You just take it. I was nearly nuts. I began to wish I'd stayed up at the Pilots' Headquarters and waited for Nymann.

IT was Nymann's cable tersely announcing the disappearance of my Uncle Mike that had brought me south. I had flown down from New York immediately, expecting to be met by Mike Rey-

nolds' partner, Captain Lundstrom. I took it for granted that Nymann, at least, would be in Punta Arenas. He wasn't; he had left on a west-bound pilotage. Instead there was only a brief note telling me that my uncle's body, along with three members of his crew, had been picked out of the sea by fishermen and brought into Punta Arenas for burial. No information as to how he died, or why Lundstrom had not come over from the island to meet me.

Even when one of the other pilots took me up to the graveyard on the hill behind the little white church and showed me the fresh mound, even then I couldn't believe Michael Reynolds was dead. Mike wasn't the kind of person you would imagine *could* die. Ever since I was ten years old, I had looked forward to the time when I could be with him. Mother had called it hero-worship. Maybe it was at first, for at the age when most kids want to be cops or fishermen, I wanted to come to the south end of the world and ride a pony on his vast *estancia*. Later it was respect and appreciation for the education Mike had given me.

Then there was the problem of La Querancia itself. This huge ranch, or estancia as Uncle Mike called it, lay somewhere over in an uncharted section of the southern coast of Tierra del Fuego. There was no means of communication between the estancia and the mainland, except by boat, and no boat had come over. So at La Querancia they could not know yet that Mike was dead. And as to why Lundstrom, or someone else from the island had not put in an appearance, no one in Punta Arenas knew. They didn't seem to know anything. Up at the Pilots' Station I was told that even Nymann, my uncle's friend and business agent, had never set foot on La Querancia.

I was in a hell of a fix! When I had received the news in New York that Mike was lost, I hadn't stopped to consider consequences; Uncle Mike was in trouble—that was enough. I'd grabbed what money I could lay my hands on and taken the first plane possible. It never occurred to me that he might be dead. Now I found myself at the other end of the world, unable to speak the language, broke, and stranded in a foreign country. For I couldn't get to La Querancia.

Four days now I had haunted the waterfront, trying to find someone to ferry me over. None knew the way. The distance was presumed to be some two hundred miles, but the course lay through twisting channels into an uncharted land of fiords, ice-bergs and glaciers. Fishermen wagged their heads and walked away when I tried to hire them to take me over. This afternoon I had come upon a furtive sealer who claimed he could arrange for me to get over to the island, for a price. He had told me to meet him tonight at the Bar Corsair.

I sipped the beer slowly, killing time. Every time a door opened a new smell was wafted my way. The gaucho coughed a lot, usually with a drink in his mouth, and when he was facing my way. But it didn't look like a good place to start an argument, so I turned my back on him. The two Scandinavians weren't much more pleasant, but they were dry.

About the time I decided to give up and go back to the Pilots' Station, somebody touched my arm. It was my sealer. He jerked his head, and weaved between the tables to the back room. I followed him. He kicked the door shut and put the table between us, as though he didn't trust me. He perched on the edge of a chair. Light from an old ship's lantern, swung in gimbals, gave his skin a jaundiced look. His long face was so thin he might have been sucking in his cheeks. He wore a rough black sweater and a black stocking cap stuck on the back of his head. He kept grinning at me like a half-wit.

"Well," I asked him, "did you find me a boat?"

"*Si, si! Toma!* Did I not tell you! Now if the senor weel geev me the t'ree hun'red pesos he promise."

"I said I'd give you *one* hundred pesos if you arranged a ride."

"*Vaya!* The senor he make fun wit' me. T'ree hun'red."

"One. Take it or leave it."

"*Por Dios!* I cannot. Already I have

"Well," I asked him, "did you find me a boat?"

geev one hun'red feefty pesos to the *cabron* who tell me."

"You're a liar!" I told him. "You can stick to the agreement or go to hell!"

He hopped off his chair and scuttled for the door like a spider. I let him run. Four days had taught me one thing, at least; you had an argument every time any money was involved. The lower class Chileno will rob you blind. He ducked outside and slammed the door. I waited. I knew he'd be back. Within a couple of minutes he sidled in again.

"Two feefty, senor?" he wheedled.

There was a chance he had something. "One fifty, you weasel. And that's final!"

They know when you mean it. He resumed his seat while I extracted a hundred and fifty pesos from my wallet. There wasn't much left. He reached for it, but I shook my head and hung onto the money. At the present rate of exchange it amounted to about five dollars American.

"Let's hear about the boat. I'll find out from the pilots if it is O.K. Then you'll get your money."

He shook his head violently. I must not tell anyone, he said, then went on to explain that the ride was not entirely legitimate. He had a friend, a mechanic for a German sportsman who had a small plane. It was equipped with pontoons and the sportsman—his name was Faber—was going to fly over to Tierra del Fuego in the morning to do some hunting. I could go with him.

It sounded phoney. "How do you know I can?"

He gave me a sly smile. This Faber, he said, was anxious to keep his flight a secret so he could get away without a lot of red tape; if the officials learned of it, he would have to get permission from the authorities, and go through a lot of rigamarole. Faber meant to slip away quietly and avoid this tedious formality. Faber was coming to the Corsair tonight; if I were to speak to him and suggest that if he took me along no one would be any the wiser. . . .

"I get it. A little polite blackmail?"

The weasel shrugged his shoulders. "*Que diablo!* The senor say he want to get over to the island, no? *Ojala!* May it be so! Now if the senor weel geev to me the two hun'red pesos he promise me. . . ."

I tossed the one fifty on the table. He snatched it up and scurried out the back way. It was close to my last five bucks, but it sounded like a good bet. I went back into the saloon.

NYMANN was standing at the bar. I recognized him from a picture in the pilots' house. He was a barrel-shaped little Dane; gray and wiry, with bright blue eyes the color of a glacier. He barely came up to my shoulder.

"Jeffrey Wynn!" he said, when I introduced myself. "Damned sorry to have been away when you arrived. I've only got a minute or so now, worse luck."

"The Greek. I heard about it."

He looked me over slowly, then grinned. "You look like Mike Reynolds," he said. "Are all you Yanks six feet and red-headed?" Apparently my smile seemed a little forced, so he added quickly: "I'm sorry you had to learn about Mike the way you did, son. Let's sit down at a table. I want to talk to you." His voice was clipped, decisive.

There were a couple of vacant tables near the door. We took the nearest one. Nymann bawled an order that brought the bar-keep on the run with two glasses and a bottle of white wine.

"I hate to find you in a dive like this," he said to me. "You should be uptown at the British Club."

"There's nothing up there but gentility," I told him. "I'm after a ride to La Querancia."

He frowned and poured a couple of drinks. "You must be patient. Somebody'll be over from the island in a few days." He hesitated. "You got my note, Jeffrey?"

"Yes. It was hard to believe. What happened to him?"

"It was just as hard for us to believe," Nymann said slowly. "I've known Mike Reynolds for twenty some years." He shook his head and sighed. "This country has the lousiest weather in the world. Storms have taken the finest. . ."

"But Mike was a Maine man, Captain; he cut his teeth on North Atlantic gales!"

Nymann nodded glumly and sat there revolving his glass. The piano was making a devilish row across the room. I leaned closer.

"I'd like to know," I said. "Mike's been a father to me. Your cable said he just disappeared."

"He'd gone out to look for Lundstrom."

"To look for Lundstrom! Was he lost, too?"

Nymann nodded miserably. "Tell me, Jeffrey—how much do you know about La Querancia?"

"Not much. Mike was Mother's only brother. He was a sea captain, until he gave that up about twenty-eight or thirty years ago to come down here and start this ranch. From his letters, it's huge and wild."

"It's all that," the Dane agreed. "Too damn wild! God only knows how many head of cattle roam the estancia; Mike didn't. You know that Lundstrom was his partner?"

"I knew that. A Norwegian who was shipwrecked near there during the last war. Uncle told us the story when he came to the States the last time."

"That's right. The place is completely isolated. . . ."

"I've found that out."

Nymann frowned and went on. "Mike wanted it like that, but it presented complications, for there's bad water between here and there. They had a small freighter for bringing over cattle and taking back supplies. That was Lundstrom's job; he took care of the transportation. A few weeks ago, Lundstrom headed this way with a load of beef. He never showed up. Later, Mike came over in a small motor launch to see what had happened. Knowing these waters, I suggested Lundstrom probably had engine trouble and had ducked into some cove for repairs. But Mike was worried. He figured the gulfers might have pirated Lundstrom."

"Gulfers? Who are they?"

Nymann glanced at his watch, and I knew he was impatient to get away. But I intended to find out what had happened to Uncle Mike no matter how late it made Nymann.

"There's a big penal colony on the eastern side of Tierra del Fuego," he said. "Fugitives get away and roam the island in bands. There is a gang of them, led by a gaucho known as Maté Cocido, operating near La Querancia. Mike Reynolds has been feuding with them for years."

"You think this gang may have murdered Mike?"

"I don't know," the Dane said. "Mike figured they might have snatched his freighter. He traded his launch and what money he had to boot, and bought another freighter. Then he mounted a couple of one-pound guns, fore and aft, and went out to look for Lundstrom. We heard nothing until his body was picked up. There was no sign of the boat."

"And Lundstrom?"

"He's probably back at La Querancia, wondering why Mike doesn't show up." He took out his watch again. "Look now, Jeffrey. There's nobody around Punta Arenas to take you over now. Lundstrom will probably be in any day; at least someone from the estancia will, for they must be low on supplies. If not, I'll be back from Valpo in about ten days, and we'll make some inquiries. Meanwhile, you'll be more comfortable. . . ."

I'd be more comfortable drinking tea at the British Club all right. Only what in hell would I use for money?

WHILE he was talking, there was a commotion in the street. Then the door crashed on its hinges as three sailors, with *H.M.S. Rajah* on their cap ribbons, lunged inside. The music stopped abruptly. The place went silent. Nothing moved but the smoke.

The British sailors swayed belligerently on the top step, eyeing the crowd.

"The bloody 'Einies ain't 'ere!" one of them growled. Obviously disappointed, they reeled out again, leaving a resentful buzz of conversation in their wake.

When the music resumed its clatter, Nymann leaned across the table.

"That's why you shouldn't be in a dump like this," he said. "Those Limeys are loaded to their Plimsoll marks with rum."

"They expected somebody."

"They've been laying outside the limit, waiting for those German tankers hiding in the harbor. Because she's a ship of war, the *Rajah* can only stay in port twenty-four hours; the freighters can stay indefinitely. When those British boys get ashore after rolling around out there for weeks at a time, they're spoiling for trouble. Every once in a while they catch a bunch of German seamen in some joint and work off a little steam. If a brawl like that starts here, you'll get embroiled. I know you Americans."

"I'm not concerned with that stuff. I want to get over to the ranch.

"But you're inviting trouble," he persisted. "Damn it, boy, I don't want to preach, but you're a foreigner and you can't speak the language. Somebody'll start a rumor that you're a British spy or a German agent or some such wild yarn." He made a gesture of finality with his large, stumpy hands. "We'll find you some foggy morning with your throat cut. I mean it."

There was no point in arguing with him. Straits pilots, by virtue of their profession, are government officials. If he wanted to get tough, he could make things very difficult for me.

"When you set that square jaw of yours," he said, watching me, "you look even more like Mike Reynolds."

I grinned. "O.K. Maybe I'll pass the time hunting. Which reminds me—do you know a guy named Faber?"

Nymann gave me a shrewd, calculating glance. "Why?"

"He's a hunter, they tell me."

The Dane looked relieved. "I've heard of him, that's all. Look now, I've got to move that Greek with the tide. If you want to walk up town. . . ."

I told him no, I thought I'd stick around. The wine was uncommonly good, and the setting was amusing. We shook hands and he went out, wagging his head.

CHAPTER II

FOUR AGAINST ONE

I SCRAPED my chair around so I could watch the fun. A couple of girls had drifted in and the tall gaucho was at the piano. He couldn't play worth a damn, but he punched some rhythm out of it. One of the girls had lured a sailor out on the floor and was trying to teach him to rhumba. The poor fool was boiled, and his legs kept buckling. It looked as though the smoke was holding him erect. The crowd howled advice and helped the music along by banging their glasses on the tables.

Every time the girl let go her hold, the sailor started to lean over. His shadow would run along the floor as though it were going to catch him. The gaucho would thump bass with his fist and yell: "*Cuidado! Loco!*"

The crowd shrieked with joy. The

girl knew just when to grab him. It was like a gag. The crowd howled: *"Otra vez! Encore!"*

In the middle of this, four German seamen tramped in. From the way they looked us over, I figured they were searching for the Britishers. If they were drunk, they didn't show it. The music stopped. The sailor on the dance floor started to topple. The girl forgot to grab him. He sat down with a thud, looking stupid and bewildered. The girl sidled off the floor into the shadow.

The four went into a huddle to talk things over. One of them had a fast-bluing eye and there was blood on his mouth. He was the mad one. I guessed the Limeys had worked him over. They started to go out, when one of them caught sight of me. He made some comment, and the others stopped. They all glared at me.

Oh, oh, I thought. *Look out, boy!* I tried to look unconcerned.

The biggest of the four stalked over to my table. He stood there looking at me, like he wanted to make up his mind. I ignored him. He leaned over.

"Englander! Ja!"

It didn't look good. He wasn't going to be ignored. He bent over the table and pushed against my chest.

"You—Englander!"

There's something about another man's hands on me I don't like. I pushed his hand down.

"Scram! I'm an American. *Americano,* get it?" He pawed at me again. "Keep your hands off me, fella!"

The German with blood on his mouth ran over. He stank of wine. He bawled something I didn't undertsand, and took a swing at me.

I ducked and edged around the table. "Stop it, you damn fool!"

The other pair came over. The little guy with blood on his mouth began to cry. He wanted revenge. He started around the table after me.

"Cut it out!" I shouted, trying to keep away from him.

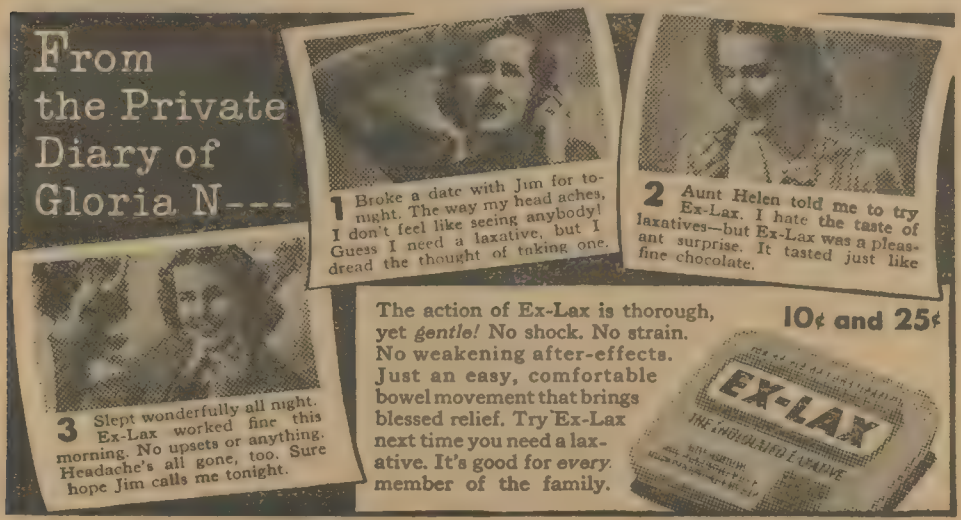
The big guy suddenly heaved the table out of the way. Before I could protect myself, he grabbed my tie. The man with blood on his mouth, chopped me on the neck. I tried to jerk away but the tie gagged me. The big guy just hung on. The other one kept swinging.

He was braced against my struggles. I couldn't back away, so I ducked my head and butted. My forehead took him flush on the nose. It cracked like a quick-broken stick. He bleated and clamped both hands to his face.

I pushed the little man aside, grabbed up a chair and jumped over against the bar.

"Keep the hell away from me!" I shouted.

The place was deadly still. My eyes smarted from the smoke. *Haven't they got any cops in Punta Arenas? Maybe*


From the Private Diary of Gloria N---
1 Broke a date with Jim for tonight. The way my head aches, I don't feel like seeing anybody! I don't feel like a laxative, but I Guess I need a laxative, but I dread the thought of taking one.
2 Aunt Helen told me to try Ex-Lax. I hate the taste of laxatives—but Ex-Lax was a pleasant surprise. It tasted just like fine chocolate.
3 Slept wonderfully all night. Ex-Lax worked fine this morning. No upsets or anything. Headache's all gone, too. Sure hope Jim calls me tonight.
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle!* No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for *every* member of the family.
10¢ and 25¢
EX-LAX
THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

I put my weight behind the bottle and laid a neat channel down his forehead.

you won't need cops, boy. Maybe they'll go away. Why kid yourself? They want to whale hell out of an Englishman. You're the next best thing.

They stood grouped around the big fellow. He was holding his nose and yelping. I was scared. Nobody else in the Corsair moved. They sat like a motion picture audience. Silent, their mouths gaping. *Keep on your feet, boy,* I told myself. *When you go down, they'll put the boots to you.*

I was tense, waiting. My heart pounded up blood I couldn't use. They talked it over. Two of them rushed me. Their heavy boots clumped on the hollow floor. They came in range and I let drive with the chair. One guy sprawled on his hands and knees, like a tired cow pony. The other one tripped and grabbed at the rail. I bashed him with my left. He slid against the table.

"Cut it out! Damn you!"

They'll never stop now, wise guy. You haven't a prayer. Oh, oh—here it comes!

The man with the broken nose came boring in. I hit with everything I had. It never fazed him. He kept coming. He grabbed my left arm. He tried to pull me away from the bar. I set myself. *Hang on, kid!* I groped behind me, found a bottle neck. His face was dark and sweaty. I put my weight behind the bottle and it laid a neat channel down his forehead. He fell on his face at

my feet. I wondered if he might be dead.

The other three waded in. The bottle was jerked out of my hands. I wasn't much good. Something hard split my cheek and my hands flew up. The hard thing hit my stomach. I was sick.

The man on the floor was not dead. He wrapped his arms around my legs, hung there. They were getting the range. It didn't hurt much. I just felt numb. *Keep throwing 'em, boy. Don't kid yourself!* Through the fog I saw their boots. Big boots.

I started to fall. I thought of the boots and grabbed the bar. My eyes went out of focus. *This is it, you red-headed fool!*

A man yelped in pain. *That's funny,* I thought. I'd quit tossing punches. Another bleat. I shook the fog out of my head and looked.

ANOTHER man was in the fight. *Thank God, red-head, he's on your side!* A tall, gaunt man in sporting tweeds and a close-fitting beret on his head. He was fighting silently, impersonally, using a slender cane like a sword. He stabbed one of the seamen in the neck. The man stumbled backward, clawing at his throat. He made queer strangled sounds. Another seaman grabbed at the stick. The man with the cane gave a loud laugh, lunged forward. The cane caught the seaman in the stomach.

My hands were free. I leaned over and clubbed the guy holding my legs. I rabbitted him on the neck until he let go. He tried to get up. I let him get just off his knees before I picked him clear of the floor with a long looping left to the jaw.

The tall man poked him with the cane until he crawled under a table.

The four Germans hesitated. Somebody across the room snickered. Sentiment was changing, and they knew it. The man with the cane laughed at them. The gaucho laughed. A woman shouted something from the shadows. I scooped up a chair and started for them. They shouted something in German and ran for the door. My leg buckled, and I would have fallen if the tall guy hadn't grabbed my arm.

"Que pasa?" he said.

"I don't speak Spanish," I told him. *"Americano. Savvy?"*

He laughed. "But of course," he said in precise English. "I asked what was the matter."

"Those damn Germans mistook me for an Englishman." He helped me over to a table. "Let me buy you a drink," I said. "Only you'll have to order. They won't understand me."

The bar-tender had come out of hiding. He approached the table.

"Que toma usted, caballeros?"

"Traigame dos cogna. Presto!" the tall man said. To me, he added: "A little brandy will liven you."

"Another round with those monkeys would do me more good," I said. "Thanks for cutting in. I was about through."

He grinned. He was a pleasant looking man with a thin, convex upper lip and a full, red lower one. The kind of a mouth that could laugh easily. His eyes were small and a trifle close-set. His nose had been broken long ago, for it lay slightly awry when you looked straight at it. His head was round, and set squarely on his shoulders. He looked strong.

The cognac arrived. He fitted a monocle into his left eye and took hold of the bottle, adjusting it to the lense. He examined it carefully before waving the bar-tender away.

"My name's Wynn," I said. "Jeffrey Wynn. I'm from New York."

The tall man rose out of his chair, clicked his heels and offered his hand.

"Mine, sir, is Faber. Kurt Faber."

I took his hand, feeling like a fool. *"Faber?"*

"But, yes. You are surprised?"

I sat down. He sat down, too. "Sure I'm surprised," I said. "I was waiting here for you."

"Indeed," he said politely. He poured two drinks slowly.

Embarrassment threw me off balance for a moment. I remembered that Faber was German. I tried to read his face. It was quite devoid of expression. His skin was firm and leathery, but blond enough to look pale. He might have been forty-five. It was hard to tell for sure. He belonged to that type of aristocrat who, on reaching a certain age, appear no longer to change. He wasn't quite as tall as I. But I'm wedge-shaped; tapering from wide shoulders. His weight was evenly distributed. He had a certain, loose-jointed swagger that I liked.

My scheme to blackmail a ride in his plane seemed a rotten way to show my gratitude.

"I heard you had a sportsplane," I said. "I wanted to make a deal."

HIS expression did not change, but his face grew hard. He twitched the muscles of his left eye and the monocle fell out. He caught it deftly and slipped it into his pocket.

"You wish to buy it, do I understand?"

"No. But I'm desperately anxious to get over to Tierra del Fuego. I would be glad to pay. . . ."

He interrupted me. "Did you hear anything else of my plans?"

The piano started again. Somebody held the street doors open a couple of minutes and the smoke drifted out.

"I only heard you were going hunting in the morning."

"Are you interested in hunting?"

"Not at the moment."

"Might I inquire as to your reason for wanting to go to such an outlandish place, sir?"

I told him about La Querancia, and why I had to get over there. I told him the whole truth, except that I was practically broke. That, I figured, was none of his business.

"If it is hunting you wish," I concluded, "I'm sure you'd find plenty of it around La Querancia."

He revolved his glass slowly, watching it reflect the yellow light above. He was thinking hard. His full lower lip folded over the upper, pressed against it. Two creases appeared between his eyes.

Not wanting him to decide negatively, I said: "It can't be over a hundred miles by air."

He sat slumped down in his chair, his chin forward on his chest. He stared at the men lining the bar, but he wasn't seeing them.

"If you have never been there," he asked suddenly, "how do you know the location?"

Mike Reynolds had sent me a chart several years ago. It was up in my bag at the hotel. I told Faber about having it.

He nodded. I knew what was worrying him. "Look here," I said. "You don't have to worry about me telling anyone about the trip. I know about the trouble and red-tape involved."

He smiled. "It can be awkward."

"I'm too damned anxious to get over to the island."

"Do you think you can be ready by daybreak?"

"I'm ready now."

He lifted his cognac. I raised my glass to his.

"*Prosit!*"

"Down the hatch!" I said.

We had two more drinks. We listened to the music part of the time, and in between I told him the story of La Querancia; how Mike Reynolds had been marooned for several months at the spot when he was shipwrecked there, nearly fifty years ago. How Mike had never forgotten his hidden valley until finally he gave up the sea and went back.

"*La Querancia,*" he said. I do not know the word."

I told him that, too. "It's probably more Indian than Spanish," I said. "It's a very old gaucho term which, they say, cannot be literally translated into English. It means something like 'the place where you belong,' or 'the place to which you must always return.' It is more than merely *home.* The connotation is romantic. It suggests a nostalgic yearning to go back. Do you follow me?"

Faber nodded. We had one more drink. "Perhaps we had better leave before those Nazi pigs return with reenforcements," he suggested. He smiled. I felt he belonged to the *old* Germany, not to the political clique now in power.

"I wish to make an early start," he said.

I tossed a handful of coins onto the table and we walked out into the coolness of the night.

Kurt Faber

The fog was lifting. The clean cool air was a shock after the fetid atmosphere of the Corsair. My skin tingled and the air was sharp to my nostrils. I gulped in great mouthfuls to wash out the taste of stale smoke. The tinny sound of the piano faded behind us. Out in the roadstead, the foghorns moaned fitfully. As we curved along the waterfront, I could make out the tall chimney of the sawmill. Later, the white tower of the church on the hill.

We walked in silence. Faber's cane made a sharp sound when it struck the sidewalk. The wind had a bit of easting in it, and beyond the *Muelle de Carga* a small surf was setting in on the beach. I could see a lacy white line where it broke.

At the door of my hotel, Faber told me how to find where his plane was moored.

"You will not mention our flight, I hope?"

"I gave you my word," I told him.

We shook hands. He took one step back, clicked his heels and brought the handle of his cane up to his chin in the salute of a swordsman.

Then he turned sharply and walked away into the night.

CHAPTER III

A TOUCH OF THE WILLIWAW

ALTHOUGH it was still dark when I reached the waterfront the next morning, Faber was already on the pier, watching a dinghy being sculled towards us. The water was glassy smooth and as black as coal tar and the dinghy wriggled across the surface like a water beetle. Beyond it, I could see the plane, bobbing to her mooring. The engine idled and occasionally coughed.

Faber was in high spirits. He seemed younger and taller in full-cut riding breeches, boots and a leather sports coat. A white scarf twisted carelessly around his neck made his face look less pale. He still wore the small, tight-fitting beret so popular in South America.

He carried a hard-leather rifle case, and while we waited he showed me the gun. It was beautifully made, slightly larger than a carbine, with a slender telescopic sight and a form-fitting grip sculptured in the stock. I had never seen a finer weapon and said so.

He laughed and pointed south. The dawn was coming slowly, like footlights brightened by a rheostat, outlining the distant peaks of Tierra del Fuego, the snow-crests rosy red in the promise of the sun.

"There you are," Faber said. "Your Land of Fire."

"Was it named that because the snow seems on fire?"

"No. The early travellers saw the fires of the Indians on the island. Don't you know the story of Magellan, Drake and Sarmiento?"

"Only as names."

"You Americans!" he laughed. "To you history started with Columbus and George Washington. You ought to get acquainted with some of the others. They were *men*, Jeffrey. God knows we breed too few of them today."

"We've got some in this world who think they're pretty tough guys," I couldn't help remarking. "They cause one hell of a lot of trouble these days."

Faber grinned. "We'll have to wait and see what history does to them."

The dinghy bumped against the pilings beneath us. I backed over the pier edge, felt the ladder with my foot and climbed down. I stood in the stern-sheets while Faber handed me the rifle. He was mighty careful with it. Then I held the boat in while he climbed down. We both sat in the stern and let the Chileños row us out to the plane.

It was a Fairchild 24, painted a sky blue. *She'll be hard to see against the sky,* I thought. A mechanic sat in the cabin at the controls, keeping the engine warm, but as we drew alongside, he slipped out onto the pontoons. He studiously avoided looking at me; I figured he was probably the guy who had tipped off my informant about the trip. I climbed into the cabin and took the rifle from Faber. He stood in the dinghy talking in Spanish to the mechanic. He sounded angry but when he swung himself into the cabin, he was grinning.

He turned on the dome light. "Now—how about that chart?"

I gave it to him. "It's pretty sketchy, Faber. And the rocks don't show."

"The rocks aren't important." He spread the sheet out on his lap and screwed the monocle into his eye. "I'm familiar with the general territory. Do you know what the markers mean?"

The pilots had explained those to me, so I passed it on. "The X's are wrecks," I told him. "We pick up the first one a little south of the entrance to Cockburn Channel; a Russian tramp set on the rocks by a squall. There are a couple others along the way, but the really important one for us is the rusted fore half of a Norwegian freighter. She sets up high and dry on a place known as Hate Reef. We turn east there."

Faber traced the course with his finger, as though he were impressing it onto his mind.

"How far from Hate Reef to La Querancia?"

"About fifty miles, they told me. More or less."

He looked a moment longer, then he straightened and slipped the monocle into his pocket.

"Luckily we're not concerned with submerged rocks, but squalls come suddenly in this section, so we'll keep wa-

ter under our pontoons. We'll bear south, keeping Mount Sarmiento over the port wing until we pick up the Russian. Then we'll follow the channel to Hate Reef. Don't those names tell a story?"

"I hope they don't name a cliff after us."

Faber grinned. "Cinch up that safety belt," he advised. "It may be a little bumpy getting underway."

He leaned out and shouted at the men in the dinghy. They cast us off and rowed hurriedly out of the way. Then they let the boat drift, watching us. They didn't see many planes down in this end of the world. Faber gunned the motor. It sputtered a couple of times, but as he leaned the mixture, it steadied into a drone. The flashing blades made a small circular rainbow of their own. Faber let her idle a minute. He seemed an experienced pilot, just the way he did things. Yet in this modern setting, he maintained the aura of old-fashioned adventure. I could imagine him swaggering through the cafés of old Vienna, like the hero of an operetta.

He pulled on a pair of gloves, slapped the throttle and the ship began to move. The wind was still easting, and as the cabin windows were down, the pontoons kicked spume spray into the cabin before she shook herself clear of the water and rose towards the sun.

FABER leveled at two thousand feet. I looked back. Below us nestled Punta Arenas —*Magalhães*—ringed by low hills which sloped to the harbor. The water, now blue-black, was getting steadily bluer.

The knot of freighters looked like tethered cattle. A little apart stood two ancient sailing hulks, their yard-arms awry; black, dead things. We left them and fled south. As the sun lifted over the horizon, the glaciers ahead turned pink. Behind them reared the snowy peaks, with night mist, like eiderdowns drawn close up around their necks. Punta Arenas melted behind and a great black fist of rock thrust itself into the Strait to starboard. Faber eased the throttle for a moment.

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"That's Cape Froward," he announced.

It jutted out like a crouching lion, windswept and bleak. Some thirty miles ahead loomed Sarmiento. As we swept past the Cape, an updraft rocked the plane. The plane seemed puny.

Faber gunned her and closed the window. "Jumping off the tail of the continents into all this wildness gives me the sensation of hopping into infinity," he said.

"I was thinking much the same thing. What do you expect to hunt?"

"That depends. Guanaco, I suppose. They have some fox, too."

I thought he was coming a long way to hunt llamas and fox, but that was his business. I watched a freighter cutting around a can buoy down below.

"Have you any idea what La Querancia looks like?" Faber asked.

"Not much. I guess we'll find it easy enough from the air, but Mike Reynolds used to boast a ship could pass his private fiord a thousand times and never notice the opening."

"Your uncle must have been quite a character. Did you see much of him?"

"Only once—when I was ten. He came up home when my father died, hoping to take my mother and me back with him. Mother had the strict New England attitude that a youngster needs schooling in his own country. I guess she thought of all distant places as slightly barbarous. She hated the sea."

Telling Faber about it brought the scene to mind. I remember that it was snowing the night Mike arrived. It was the one and only time I ever saw him. He came stalking into the house with tiny icicles hanging from the tip of his nose and hoar frost on his beard. Men had quit wearing beards in our town, and it made him look wild and exciting. He was tall and stooped with a predatory leanness about his features. He seemed very old to me then—actually he must have been under sixty—and his skin was burned almost black. He took a shine to me right away, and when he couldn't argue with Mother, he'd sit me on his knee and talk to her through me. That was a mistake, for the wild yarns he told me about wrecks and storms off the Horn and the Indians who paddled around in the snow, naked in their skin canoes, appalled my mother. Mike hated missionaries, and that also rankled Mother's Methodist soul. She wouldn't consider leaving. I wept and threatened to run away and all that stuff. But on a Saturday night Mike vanished mysteriously, and the next day I went to Sunday school as usual.

Mike sent us money regularly, and insisted I go to college. He wrote twice a year to Mother, and when she died, he wrote to me. It was understood that I was to come to La Querancia eventually.

Faber jerked me back to the present. "Look—there's the Russian!"

"She's nearly broken up," I remarked.

Faber began chatting about the places we passed. The country was certainly wild. Everything seemed magnified; the winds, the currents and the rocky wastelands. I noticed that the westerly side of the rocks and hills were barren from the constant pounding of the prevailing gales. Faber's knowledge of the area was amazing. He could name bays and inlets that weren't even mentioned on the chart, yet I was quite sure he had never flown over this territory before. I mentioned that.

"I asked a lot of questions," he explained. "If you get lost in a plane, you can't bob around like you can in a boat."

Within half an hour we picked up another black patch against the rocks. Faber pushed the nose down. A swift tide was ebbing, and I could make out the fore half of a freighter perched on the ledge of a reef.

"How the devil did she get up there?" grunted Faber. "Is that the Norwegian?"

"That's her," I agreed. "Her skipper became Mike Reynold's partner. His name is Lundstrom. He was trying to find a channel through here back in 1915 and stumbled on the German raider *Dresden*. I remember Uncle Mike telling about it. The *Dresden* needed supplies because the British squadron was looking for her, so she tried to halt the freighter. Lundstrom told them to go to hell, and even when they nearly blew him out of the water, he drove his ship so hard on that rock she broke in two. The after end sank in deep water."

"That was foolish," reasoned Faber. "He might have been killed."

I suddenly remembered that he, too, was German. "Perhaps," I said, "but I still admire his nerve."

Faber laughed. "You're young, Jeffrey. Here—take the controls a moment. I want another look at that chart."

THE plane was dual control. I slipped my feet on the rudder-bars and took hold of the stick between my knees. Although I had handled a ship before, I was amazed at the way this one bucked and jerked in the uneven air. It hadn't seemed rough when Faber handled it. He spread out the chart.

"We're supposed to double back almost south-east into Bluff Bay," he mused aloud. "The cartographer becomes a little vague, and someone has penciled in what looks like a channel through to Desolate Bay."

"That's the private waterway to La Querancia. Mike didn't want it on the Admiralty charts. It's not practical for commercial navigation and he wanted to keep out the sealers and their kind."

"Some men are like that," Faber said, folding the chart. "They try to keep things as they find them. It's a form of escape from reality, I suppose."

He blinked the monocle out of his eye and took back the controls. He dipped one wing in a salute to the wreck below, before swinging east.

The sun had lost its brilliance. It hung in a gray sky like a disk of molten metal. The wind was suddenly gone. We seemed to be suspended in a vacuum. Faber made no comment, but I knew he was conscious of the change for he speeded the engine and began to climb. The barren walls drew closer, as though we were driving into a rocky funnel.

"We'd better get above this," Faber grunted, pushing her up.

We nosed over the rim and the wind snatched at us. Faber scowled and dove back into the doubtful protection of the fiord.

"You're getting your baptism as a Cape Horner," he said. "This damn wind may work up to a speed of a hundred miles an hour."

I was already feeling a touch of nausea and his remark didn't help. I remembered the yarns Mike had told us about what he called Cape Stiff weather. It had sounded exciting in Mother's kitchen up home. Now I didn't like it.

"Maybe we ought to set down in some protected cove and let it blow over," I suggested.

Faber snorted. "You don't know these squalls," he said. "Cinch up your belt. We'll try again."

We went up again, cautiously this time. As we crept over the rim, like men stealing out of a trench, the view was bleak and terrible. The land lay like a huge, frozen carcass, uncharted, unexplored, without life save the penquins and seals and the albatross. Eons of wind had swept away all other life, beating the rocks a whitish gray, and what stunted vegetation did exist lay hidden in the jagged crevices and ravines.

A wispy vapor began to steam up off the water. It filled the gorge and rose above the cliffs. Faber fought the bucking ship higher, only to meet the ceiling closing down, cold and damp from the glaciers. Suddenly I was conscious that the noise of the wind had stopped.

"We're going to catch hell now!" Faber shouted. "Keep clear of those controls!"

The squall came screaming down on us! That first slap knocked all sense of time, space and direction out of me. I grabbed the edge of the seat and hung on. One moment the water below had been placid. Now it was a boiling cauldron. Then we were falling. . . .

Faber pulled back on the stick and we seemed to be corkscrewing straight up. Up, up. An instant later the blow came from below, as though the squall missing us in that first mad downward rush, had bounced off the water to seize us underneath. We catapulted out of the gorge into the storm. The little plane looped end over end, like a shot duck, and I could see neither sea nor sky. Once I glimpsed Faber, straight and expressionless, as though frozen to the controls.

The storm seized the ship in its teeth, and shook it. I could hear her strain at the joints. Day vanished. I clamped my hands around the seat grips. I closed my eyes.

The little plane looped end over end like a shot duck.

One moment the wind was shrieking; the next it was gone. Just like that! We wobbled uncertainly for a couple of minutes, like a groggy fighter back on his feet. Then the plane steadied. The squall left no trace. It might never have happened.

I looked below. With the storm had vanished the channel and the bleak rocks. Underneath us stretched a fairy-land of winter, of blue snow and firm, soft clouds. It was as though I had fallen asleep in a theater and awakened to a different play and setting. I looked at Faber. He was grinning.

"That, boy, was plenty fast trav-

elling!" he said, a bit drily. "Lord knows where the squall set us."

"You can sure fly," I said warmly. "I hadn't quite got to the point of reviewing a misspent youth or anything, but once or twice I thought my number was up."

"Number up? I do not understand."

"Slang. Americanese for the idea that you are about to die. Say, I thought I'd seen squalls on Long Island Sound, but they had the decency to proceed in not more than two directions at the same time. What in the devil was that blow?"

Faber chuckled. "A touch of the williwaw."

"The what?"

"Williwaw. It's sort of a sea-going tornado, peculiar to this country. That wasn't a real one—that was a squall with a little williwaw thrown in for good measure. But that's the reason I couldn't set down."

He banked sharply and dropped to about three thousand feet. Then he circled and started to climb again.

"I thought I saw a road," he said. "We're getting low on gas."

CHAPTER IV

I ACQUIRE A PARTNER

FABER didn't have to write me a letter about it; I knew we were lost. We began to zig-zag back and forth through this unknown wilderness. Perhaps it was just the hang-over from my air-sickness, but it seemed we had lost the earth entirely and were wandering through infinity in search of it. The sun was shining, but the horizon was lost in mist. Even the tremendous mound of Sarmiento had vanished.

"About that williwaw," I said. "How does it differ from a squall?"

"Direction, mostly. It's a hurricane traveling vertically instead of horizontally. Y'see, the high winds whip all around the earth without interruption until they slap against the mountain peaks down here. A chunk of that wind is sliced off and comes ricochetting straight down. That's a williwaw. In the Fuegian fiords and the Patagonian channels, they're powerful enough to lay a good sized ship on her beam's end."

You're a funny duck, brother, I thought. I wondered where in the devil he ever dug up so much information about a relatively unknown section of the world. I stole a glance at him again. He rode his controls as casually as though merely making a circle of his own landing field. At some time or another, in his mysterious life, he must have had military flight experience. I realized that in the short time we had been together, he had carefully extracted the general outline of my life. Yet I knew absolutely nothing about him. Somehow, I couldn't find a way of getting beneath the surface of the man. He was like a package enveloped in cellophane. None the less, I liked him.

I saw he had a radio in the ship so I asked him why he didn't use it.

He shook his head. "There is no beam down here, Jeffrey. It's not much of a set anyway. I bought it when I was in your country so I could listen to Charlie McCarthy." He looked at me and his eyes twinkled.

"Well, it was just a suggestion," I grumbled. I don't like to be laughed at.

We turned east again. The snow began to disappear. The land gained courage from the protection of hills, and green trees marched down to the blue edge of the water. Suddenly Faber dropped one wing and we shot downward in a long, side-slip.

"A road, Jeffrey! See it?

It was on his side, but I could see it as we went singing down; a twisting chalk line marking the fringe of forest. Then ants walked the white line.

"We're in luck!" Faber exulted. "There's cattle, and men."

The road touched the edge of a small lagoon. Faber swerved close above the horsemen and waved. Then as we banked and straightened for a landing near them, I saw the white puffs appear among the horsemen. An instant later, a small hole appeared in the wing just outside the cabin. Something crashed against the motor.

Those damn fools!" snarled Faber. Another slug passed through the fuselage behind me with a peculiar *pss-zing.*

I jerked down my window and waved my hat. But the shooting continued. We were very close, and I could see three or four of the dozen riders dismount and kneel with carbines.

"Look out!" I shouted.

Faber cursed, gunned the engine and whipped us around in a vertical bank that plastered my insides against my ribs. Putting our tail to the men, to offer as small a target as possible, he zig-zagged us out of range.

"What was the idea?" I asked. That last slug had come close.

"Damn renegades!" he fumed. He paused, sniffing.

I smelled it too.

Faber cursed again and accelerated the motor. "They've punctured the tank, The swine! The rotten, fugitive swine!" His rage dissipated as quickly as the squall had done. "We'll climb as high as we can," he added, with a rueful laugh. "Maybe we can choose a landing place. I wish to hell I could get a bearing on Sarmiento so's I could have some idea where we are. How're you feeling?"

"Mad," I said. "I wish I hadn't gotten you into this."

"Forget it! We have food and whiskey for several days, and a couple of rifles. Maybe, like your uncle, we'll find a *Shangri-la* of our own. How does that strike you?"

"It doesn't. I'll settle for La Querancia."

"You've got a lot of nerve," Faber said. "How old are you, Jeffrey?"

"Twenty-five." I couldn't resent his cross-examination, somehow. He did it impersonally, casually, as if it didn't much matter whether I answered or not. Perhaps he was only making conversation to keep my mind off the inevitable landing.

I turned to the window again. Fiords passed beneath us in endless profusion. In some were glaciers, like cascades frozen in action. They looked grim and deadly, for behind them ran a hedge of mountains over which we could not climb if grounded below. The smell of gasoline was strong. I tried to ignore it, to concentrate on the scene below.

Then, as Faber banked around a mountain, I saw it. I saw it first, because it was on my side. In a fiord so landlocked it might have been a lake, save for its narrow entrance, was a valley as lush and green as the summer hills of my New England.

"*La Querancia!*" I shouted.

A second later the motor coughed once, began to sputter. Then it was dead. Faber leaned forward and cut the switch, and we were soaring silently through space.

"We are very lucky!" Faber said quietly.

THE fiord looked to be about a half mile in length. It was roughly tear-shaped, and at the narrow end the gateway between two tall cliffs was at an angle. I could understand how a ship might pass without seeing the opening. The wide, soft curve at the south end of the fiord cut into a valley that sloped gently from the water to the ring of snow-capped mountains which completely fenced it in. As we soared in, a dozen mollihawks climbed up to look us over. I could make out a cluster of smaller buildings grouped around a large, stone castle. Behind the houses, neat white fences divided the valley into squares colored by wheat and alfalfa and corn. Coming after the bleakness of the Straits, it was unreal.

"I hope this is it," Faber said.

"It is." I was sure of it. I could see traces of my uncle's New England background here.

As we dropped lower, the air warmed. Faber gently eased back on the stick. The water blurred beneath us. The pontoons touched the water, bounced lightly, and then with white spray arcing out on either side, we skidded up to a small, floating wharf. It was a masterly landing. Faber had gauged it so our momentum carried us alongside.

I jumped out onto the pontoon and dropped to the wharf. I held the ship in while he climbed out and secured it.

We saw a half dozen men come running down the slope from the house. Several of them carried rifles, and the pudgy little man in the lead had a large revolver strapped around his waist. All but the first man looked like Chileños;

all of them wore the flapping *bombachas* of gauchos.

Faber grinned at me. "This is where you take over."

The pudgy man started to bellow long before he reached us.

" 'Ere, 'ere! W'at the bloody 'ell you gents doin' 'ere?"

He pounded up to a wheezing stop before us, legs apart, his stumpy thumbs hooked in his sash. He looked slightly ridiculous. He had a little round head with a very flat nose and light blue eyes better suited to laughter than the scowl he was wearing. He was well into his fifties, and almost bald save for the tufts of whitish gray hair stuck on either temple, like rabbit tails. I wanted to laugh.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "This is private property, I'll bloody well 'ave you know."

"Don't get your blood pressure up," I said. "Isn't this La Querancia?"

"What do you want?"

"Where's Captain Lundstrom?" I asked.

A little of his belligerence fell away. He looked merely disgruntled. "You come from Magalhães?"

Faber said: "Yes, this morning. We ran into a squall."

"Take us to Captain Lundstrom," I insisted.

The barrel-shaped man looked anxious. " 'E ain't 'ere. You sure he ain't in Magalhães with Cap'n Mike? You seen Mike Reynolds, didn't you?"

"Look," I said. "Who are you?"

"I'm 'Enry 'Iggins," he said, after a pause. "I'm the major domo."

"Well, Mike Reynolds is dead," I said.

"H'it's a bloody lie!" Higgins said, not as a contradiction, but as if the saying of it made it so.

"Unfortunately, it happens to be the truth," I said. "I'm Jeffrey Wynn, Mike's nephew."

"From North H'America!"

"That's right. This is Mr. Faber. Now if you will take us to whoever is in charge . . . "

The little cockney blinked his blue eyes and his mouth sagged. "W'ere is Cap'n Lundstrom, sir?"

"I don't know, Higgins. Let's get up to the house."

"Of course," said Higgins. He turned to his men and made a brushing motion with his hands as if shooing flies away. "*Vamos! Quita!*" he shouted at them.

We followed him up the slope.

THE path was quite steep. Further to our right was a road, but it did not lead to the house. Higgins' short little legs were powerful, and I was panting by the time we reached the level of the buildings. The house had a tremendous window facing the fiord. The main entrance was on the east side. As we walked around the house, Higgins fell in beside me.

"W'at 'appened to Cap'n Mike, Mr. Wynn?"

"We don't know for sure, Higgins. His body was found at sea."

"H'it's 'ard to swallow, sir," he said. "I served under Mike Reynolds more years than I likes to think about. I was bosun aboard 'is last command. 'E brought me 'ere with 'im. That was close to thirty years ago."

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I didn't say anything. As we rounded the house, I could hear the shrill voice of a woman berating someone in Spanish. The voice had a decided English inflection and each word was punctuated with a sharp rap, as from a judge's gavel. As we came up to the veranda, I saw the old lady standing in the doorway, awaiting us.

Higgins planted one foot on the lowest step, but he did not go up.

"Cap'n Mike's dead!" he said thickly. He sniffled, and wiped his nose with his sleeve.

"What's that?" barked the old woman. "What's that you say? Come, speak up, you fool! What are you sniveling about?" She had a cane in her hands and she rapped the ferrule smartly against the floor. Then she cocked her head and waited his answer.

She was an incredibly tiny thing. Not over five feet, and I doubted she weighed a hundred pounds. She was enveloped in black satin from the high neck of her dress to the hem that touched her small ankles. She must have been in her seventies, yet her skin was singularly free of lines. Her hair was quite white, and slightly askew. I suspected it was a wig. She had the blackest eyes I ever saw.

Higgins seemed incapable of further speech, so I cut in.

"I'm Jeffrey Wynn. I've just flown over from Punta Arenas with some very bad news. May I come in?"

"What's this about Mike Reynolds?" she demanded without moving.

"He's dead."

She never batted an eye. After a slight pause, she asked: "Is he buried over there?"

I guess I looked pretty foolish. "Why, yes," I said. "Nearly a week ago."

"Then there's no use standing outside," she said querulously. "Come in, come in. You don't know who I am, I suppose. No, of course you wouldn't. That stupid Higgins wouldn't think to speak of it. I'm Sarah Montagu. The house-keeper. Don't stare. Come right in."

She rapped her cane to emphasize her command, and as she turned into the house, the satin of her full skirt made a soft, *whish-shing* sound.

I glanced at Faber, and for the first time since I had known him, I saw surprise on his face. Then the corner of his thick lower lip curved up in a whimsical smile.

"I'll be damned!" he said softly.

"You gents better go h'in like she says," Henry Higgins advised lamely, and walked away.

She was waiting for us in the large, dim-lit hallway. She had straightened her hair so the crown was centered on her head. I felt myself liking her. There was a rare majesty about her, like a peppery little queen. I introduced Faber. He bent over her hand with a courtly, old-world grace that I envied. It seemed particularly fitting. She gave him a nod, then turned back to me.

"Tell me, Jeffrey—what happened to Michael?"

I told her what little I knew about it. She listened quietly, like a tiny doll. When I had finished, she nodded.

"He must be brought back here to rest, Jeffrey," she said gently. "Remember that. We all have our resting places picked out. Michael's is on a mountain where he can watch the sea and La Querancia and the albatross through all eternity. Michael believed the legend of the albatross. Do you, Jeffrey?"

"I'm not familiar with it," I said.

"You won't forget about Michael's return?"

"I'll arrange it," I promised.

Her voice had softened, but now she brought it back to its former brusqueness.

"Well, I presume you own half of this place now, so you might as well come in and look around." She clapped her hands, and a fat native woman evolved out of the darkness.

"Tonita—go find that child of mine! Go on, go on. And set two more places at the table. Don't stand there gaping. *Vamos!*" She thumped her cane until the fat woman fled.

"You see, Jeffrey, we don't have many guests at La Querancia."

She led the way along the hall to a pair of massive doors that must have been a good fifteen feet tall. At her nod, I pulled them open and we passed into a huge living-room.

THERE could never have been a room like that anywhere else, I'm sure! It must have been at least forty feet long, and perhaps twenty-five in width. The floor was weathered teak, caulked like a ship's deck, and holy-stoned to a soft sheen. A tremendous beamed ceiling was supported by great oak timbers, adzed by hand, and almost black from seasoning. I knew without being told that they were the ribs of some old sailing ship. Opposite the door was a row of thick glass windows, taken from the wheelhouse of a freighter, that looked out upon the blue fiord. At one end of the window was an azimuth, for taking a bearing on whatever might come within range, and at the other end was a fine polished brass telescope, set on a stand and pointed at the distant mouth of the narrows.

In the far wall was a fireplace big enough for me to walk into. Two small anchors served as uprights for andirons. The furnishings were all large and comfortable, like you find in mens' clubs, and the doll-like old lady accentuated their massiveness.

But it was the books that caught my eye. One entire wall was covered with them. Some were bound in the skin of unborn calf, others in seal-skin, others in leather from a score of creatures I could not identify.

Faber walked over and chose a book at random. He ran his hand caressingly over the binding.

"Beautiful!" he muttered, almost reverently. "Priceless!"

Sarah Montagu sniffed. "I'm glad you like 'em," she said primly. "It took me enough time to do them."

I pulled out a volume done in sharkskin. "You bound these?" I asked her.

"Who else around here would?" she snapped, but I could see she was pleased.

Faber clicked his heels and bowed stiffly from the waist. "May I salute you, Madame," he said. "In all the world I have never seen their equal."

"Well, now, isn't that nice," said the old lady. She walked over to a table, helped herself to a cigarette from a little bronze box, and offered them to us. I held a match for her.

"Maybe you would like a drink?" she suggested. She was reaching for a bell-cord, when a horse galloped to a stop outside. Someone ran across the porch. A door slammed, and a moment later a girl ran into the room.

She was very little bigger than the old woman, and her hair was so blond it seemed full of light. When she saw us, she stopped and her mouth froze half-open. Her lips were very red, and her teeth very white, and there was the color of the wind in her cheeks.

I know I was staring like a damn fool, but this was one addition to the household I had not expected. She was about twenty, I guess. She wore a man's shirt open at the throat, and over it, a calf's skin vest. She also wore *bombachas.*

"Don't stand there gaping like a ninny!" shrilled the old lady. "Mind your manners! These gentlemen brought news of Uncle Mike. He's dead, Shirley. This tall, startled-looking young man is Jeffrey Wynn. You've heard of him."

Sara Montagu looked at me. "Jeffrey, this is Captain Lundstrom's daughter, Shirley. She owns the other half of La Querancia."

Startled-looking was right. Things were happening too fast for me. *This* beautiful girl, my *partner!* No wonder I gaped at her.

Shirley recovered before I did. She pulled off a riding glove and offered me her hand.

"Welcome to La Querancia, Jeffrey. I'm terribly sorry about Uncle Mike!"

I managed to stammer my thanks, but forgot to let go her hand. She withdrew it gently, but firmly.

"Tell me," she asked, "did you hear anything about my father?"

"We might as well sit down to our post-mortems," snapped Sarah Montagu.

CHAPTER V

MATÉ COCIDO

WE moved over near the fireplace and settled in deep, comfortable chairs. Tonita, the fat native woman, wheeled in a table with a heavy silver tea service and decanters of liquor. I found myself

next to Shirley. Perhaps it was an accident. I know I'd rather have taken a beating than answer that question about her father.

"Now about Father?" she asked me again.

I told her the truth; that Captain Lundstrom had not shown up at Punta Arenas. I repeated what little I knew about Mike Reynolds' death.

"Papa isn't dead!" she said positively.

Sarah Montagu was pouring a cup of tea. She paused, and looked over at the girl.

"Child, why don't you stop torturing yourself? You must face the inevitable."

"I know he isn't!" insisted the girl. "I can feel it inside of me. I'd know if he were dead. He's alive. And he's not far from here, either!"

"You talk like a crazy gypsy!" snapped the old woman. "*You can feel it.* Rubbish!" She gave another snort and resumed her pouring. "I'd like to know what happened to Mike Reynolds, just the same."

"I mean to find out," I told her.

Faber was drinking whiskey and soda. "What is your idea, Miss Lundstrom?" he prompted her.

She was balancing a cup of tea, and I could see her hands shake.

"I think those contemptible gulfers murdered him!" she cried.

"You mean the fugitives from the Argentine Penal colony at the other end of Tierra del Fuego?" Faber asked. "Do they get this far down?"

Shirley nodded. There was fire in her eyes. "Yes. Maté Cocido's band is always roving somewhere near here. I'm hoping for the day when someone will wipe those renegades from the island!" She turned her head and her eyes met mine.

"That'll be a job for me," I said. *Stop looking at her, you damn fool! Haven't you ever seen a pretty wench before?*

"Stuff and nonsense!" chirped the old lady. "Maté Cocido had nothing to do with Mike's death. Those two men enjoyed each other; it gave each one of them somebody to fight with. Oh, he's a handsome scalawag!"

"*Aunt Sarah!*" cried Shirley.

The old lady sniffed so hard her wig slanted jauntily to one side of her head. "I don't care. I do admire him! He had enough spirit to fight his way out of that rotten prison, and enough brains to stay out."

"He's a ruthless murderer!" Shirley said.

"Pshaw! You sound like a missionary! Murder! What kind of a country do you think this is? It's the survival of the fittest, young woman!"

"*Bravo!*" laughed Faber. "You are a true Cape Horner, Madame. I was trying to tell Jeffrey much the same thing. I am afraid he does not agree with me."

Sarah Montagu frowned over her cup at me. "He won't last long in this part of the world if he doesn't," she remarked.

"We probably met your bandit," Faber said. "That is, informally." Then he told about our brush with the men on horseback. Shirley paled.

"Which way were they heading?"

Faber shrugged. "The road was winding, but the general direction was this one."

Sarah Montagu yanked the bell cord near her hand. "I'll have Tonita tell Higgins. At least he can wake up his lazy guards."

"Were there many of them in the band?" Shirley asked in a hushed, small voice.

"Maybe a dozen," I told her. "They'll get a warm reception if they come near me."

"Such rubbish!" said the old lady in exasperation. "Maté Cocido hasn't raided us in over three years. I haven't even seen the devil in that time." She gave the bell cord another yank.

But when the door banged open, it wasn't the fat old Tonita who clattered into the big room. It was Henry Higgins.

He stood with his stumpy legs apart, his protruding belly heaving with exertion and his blue eyes bugged out. He moved his mouth futilely a few times before any words came out.

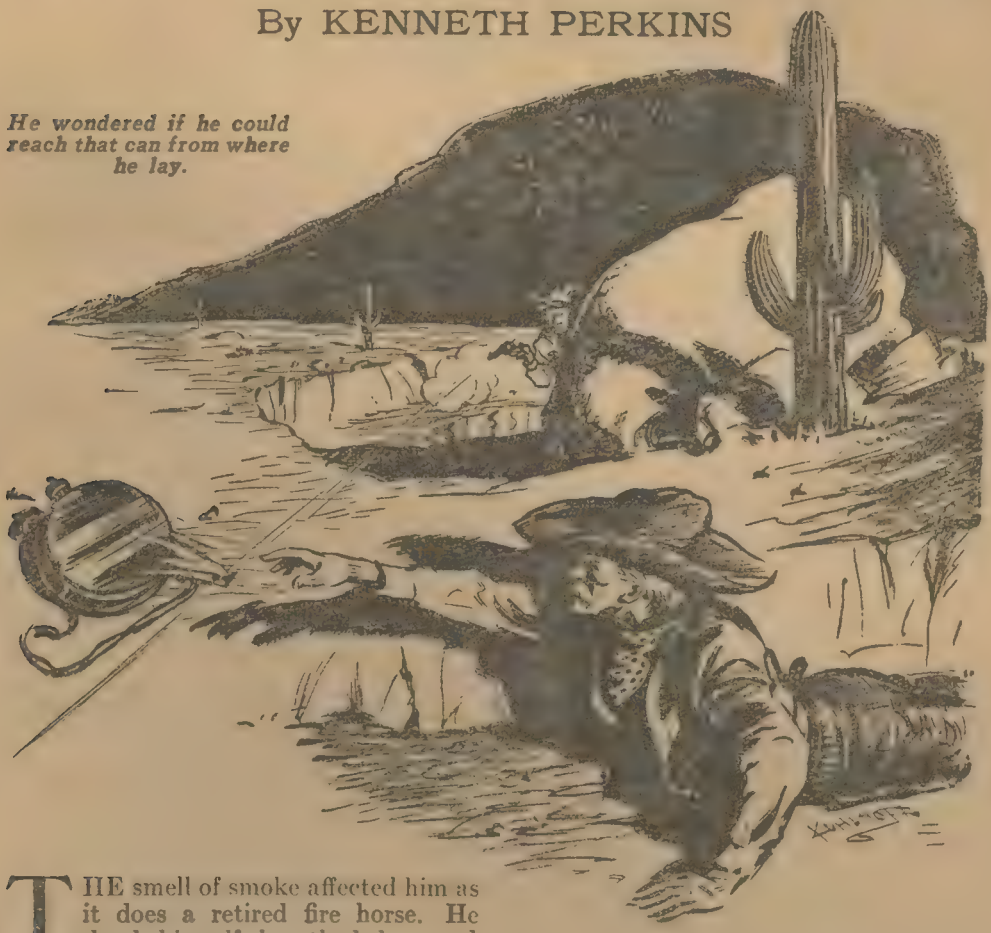
Finally he gasped: "The bloody gulfers! So 'elp me God! They're comin'!"

Higgins was looking at me, waiting. I was the owner of La Querancia now. This was my fight.

(To be continued)

MOSSHORN LAW

By KENNETH PERKINS



He wondered if he could reach that can from where he lay.

THE smell of smoke affected him as it does a retired fire horse. He shook himself, breathed deep and his eyes glanced uncertainly through the gunnysack curtain of his window.

He did not exactly smell gunpowder, except in his imagination, but he heard the first shots. Thirty years of sheriffing had marked his soul as well as his lank, burned body. He had a bone or two wired up, a sprayed gun scar on the cured leather of his cheek, and he had thin long hair which had turned streaky roan. Once it had been red, which was why they called him Colorado.

Since he had mellowed a little too much in his latter years, too anxious to find the good streak in a horse thief instead of bringing him home to be hanged, he awoke one morning to find to his amazement that the county had elected a new sheriff. Nevertheless when he heard those shots over in the chowcart by the tracks, he quivered and belted on his gun as of habit. He saddled a goose-rumped calico horse and left his alfalfa and chickens, not doubting for a moment that he would be called upon to take charge.

But they had already wired to the new sheriff—the one at Uvade—and the telegraph operator at the water-tank station was still tapping out more details. Colorado had to get the story from the chowcart man.

Two desert rats had argued about a gold poke of pepitas and nuggets and then started hitting each other. A younger man had watched from the other end

of the counter, grinning and tapering a cigarette. He had come in asking for a meal in return for washing dishes. Pete, the chowcart man, refused him but there was a bronco look to his eyes that frightened Pete, so he gave him a bowl of huckydummy. He was the one that did the killing. He did it quite casually, without hurry, without a twitch to his straight, clamped smile.

"It was like a coyote watching two dogs fighting over a chunk of meat," said the chowcart man, "then stealing the chunk when the dogs were wore out. All this cool hellion does is just wait till one of the fist-fighters is knocked out, then he shoots the other and takes his gold poke."

Colorado put two fingers on his upper teeth moving the plate so he could think better. "Sounds like Horse Daley. I heard he was hanging around the Bench sparking a nester's daughter. Should of kept my eye on him."

"The track crew foreman said he'd asked for a job, but he looked like a kid used to ride with the Bad Bunch. Foreman told him to drift."

Colorado looked down at the hulking body on the floor of the lunch wagon. One wild shot had hit him in the shin, another smack in the chest.

"What happened to the other gold-hunter—the one who was knocked down?"

"He come to during the shooting and must've been scairt he'd be blamed for an accomplice. You see he'd shot his mouth off plenty in front of us all telling how he'd put up a discovery monument down in the Coyotero badlands and how this big bruiser here had jumped the claim."

"Reckon it's up to me to ride shotgun on Horse Daley."

"I wouldn't if I were you," said the chowcart man.

Colorado checked up on the trail. Horse Daley had left the chowcart by way of the kitchen where he stole a vinegar jug. He filled this at the water tower then jogged off complacently, taking the turnpike west.

The telegraph operator came from his shack. The Uvade sheriff, he said, had put up a posse and was going to patrol the turnpike from the water tower west to the Big Mesas. He had enough deputies to comb all the intermediate gulches before morning.

No one asked old Colorado what he thought of this campaign. So he did not tell them. Perhaps the Uvade sheriff did not know about that vinegar jug. The chowcart man told Colorado about it because it was a personal grievance. It suggested the possibility that Daley was not sticking to the turnpike where there was water every few miles. He was doubling back and crossing the desert. And that meant that he would have to fill his water pack at Wolf Wells. If he did not go straight there, the sun would drive him there soon enough.

Colorado rode down to trap him. He did not put up a posse. He always tracked with a minimum of dust.

It was the smell of risen dust that told him he was on the fugitive's trail. It must be a fugitive because he stuck to the badland cracks instead of riding on the open plain. The silt stung Colorado's eyes so that at sundown the single planet above the Big Tables looked like the slender pointed star he had worn half the years of his life. It made him feel young. He was not seventy but forty. His hair was bright red again. He jogged on, humming: *Oh, don't you cry for me!*

SUNUP was hot over the water pocket when he got there and filled his hide-covered can. He tethered his horse in a deep cut, dragged his water pack to the shade of a rock, then stretched out between two red boulders to wait for the fugitive. It gave him a good view of the sink and its crater-like walls which were horse high and of quartz.

A rider came jingling and clip-clopping along, slid his paint pony down the bank and let it drink. The water was the concentric blue point in many evaporation circles of saleratus. It looked like a giant web, and into it the man stepped.

He was a loose-jointed fellow, smooth of movement like a varmint, with eyelids habitually low against the desert

glare. It was Horse Daley, all right.

Colorado did not wait for his own calico to nicker. He called in a genial voice: "Let's talk this over, pilgrim, amicable."

Daley's long body whipped behind a rock like an animal. The speed of that disappearance sent a shake to Colorado's knee caps. He wished his age was not against him. It would count in a fight like this with a half-brute who seemed to act by reflexes alone. He should have snipe-shot him. But this was against a habit of many years. Colorado always gave these bronco kids a chance even when they were wanted dead or alive. Once he had given a wild one the benefit of the doubt and guessed wrong. But the kid felt more sheepish about it than Colorado himself, and from then on tried to go straight.

"Play it my way, Daley," he yelled, "and give up without any smoke. All I got to do is lie here behind my rock."

"What's wrong with my lying here, too?" Daley laughed back. "Go ahead, fill your pipe, old hoppergrass."

That was just what Colorado was doing. From behind Horse Daley's rock came an answering signal of smoke talk which stated that the state of siege was conceded. The fugitive had no objections for the simple reasen that the water pocket was right beside him where he could drink all he wanted without getting up from behind his boulder.

Then, to his consternation, Colorado found out he had made a tragic mistake. He had trapped himself—not Daley. It was the sun and the many multiplied suns reflecting from quartz that reminded him he had left his own water pack about ten feet away in the shadow of a rock. And it was in plain view and range of the killer! Colorado would not have done that when he was young and when his brains and hair were bright.

With a fast puffing of his pipe, a faster pumping of his old heart, he realized that one shot from Daley, pinging that can, would win the game. Without water a man could not last two hours in that concentrated heat. Daley could lie there, sipping liquid crystal, while his besieger slowly dried up. The thought of it made

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Colorado's tongue swell and stick to his upper plate.

He shouted again, trying to keep the panic out of his voice: "You can't buck this siege, Daley." He had to tell a preposterous lie to sound convincing. "The Uvade sheriff is coming down, following my trail. He'll be here pronto enough."

There was a silence, because this was something that Daley had to think about. Meanwhile, Colorado had time to size up his own desperate fix. He would have to crawl the ten-foot distance behind a slab of rock to reach his water pack. There was a good chance he could reach it before Daley could figure out what he was doing—for quick reflexes and quick figuring are two different things. Daley was the animal type, with the instincts of a wolf long hunted. He could act but not think. Colorado started crawling.

The can was still there eight feet away, six feet, four feet—almost within arm's reach. Colorado chuckled. Just like these killers nowadays, he thought. Brains enough to kill and rob a man, but that's all. The Bad Bunch in the days before wire, knew how to read sign. Just look at the sign at that waterhole—when Colorado had taken the can from the hole to the shadow of that rock, his boots had been muddy enough to pick up the surface sand in perfectly outlined prints. The prints led straight to the can, a written testimony showing that the can had just been filled. And yet Horse Daley could not see it! Wheybrained—that's what he was.

INSTEAD of pinging the can, Daley threw one shot after another at Colorado as he crawled on his belly inch by inch. A slug cut his tall-peaked hat, another burned the hair in his ear. He felt the third like the thwack of a fence post in his head as the shot singed his scalp. He slumped, staring crazily at the many suns. Thirst shriveled him as suddenly as if he had been pushed into a fire. He wondered if he could reach that can from where he lay. He stretched one long arm almost, so it felt, as if something pulled the bones from their sockets. The sky burst into flame, but he brought the can tumbling, hitting him on the shoulder, rolling to the sand where it burst open.

He stayed there, clawing at mud, hugging what was left of the water. Then he yelled, with a pretense of victory: "Missed your one and only chance, pilgrim! I'm drinking to your health!"

"Meaning you think you'll take me alive?"

"I like to play it that way. I won't take you dead—unless you ask for it."

"You'd as lief kill me first and then find out why I gunwhipped that desert rat in Pete's wagon?"

"We all know why you gunwhipped him. You knew he was toting gold."

"I gave the gold to the other one—the little runt he was kicking."

"Yeah? What for?" Colorado asked, scoffing.

"He was kicking the little feller's guts into the next lot. So I shot his boots for him."

Colorado chewed on this. Something about Daley's alibi smacked of the truth. The big prospector had been hit by what seemed a wild shot in one leg. This Horse Daley was not the sort to throw wild shots. They all hit.

But Colorado said: "That's a pretty gauzy yarn, Daley. If you were just helping out a little bird because the odds weren't straight, what'd you run away for?"

"Because hitting the big guy in the leg wasn't enough. He drew on me. I had to salt him."

"Still gauzy. Pretending to stick up for fair play when you've been a seventeen-button rattler ever since you were a kid. You saw a chance to glom onto a gold poke and cover it up by posing as a hero."

Daley's voice, coming from behind a rock, showed the first shake of excitement. "You think I'd pull a Yaqui trick like that, Colorado?"

"If I thought there was the slightest chance you were risking your neck just because a little runt was down and getting kicked, I wouldn't turn you over to that shotgun posse coming yonder."

Daley's shadow on the sand showed his head jerking up. Far off against a red mesa, a smirch of brown showed where

hoofs were smoking down the cuts. It was quite possible that the sheriff at Uvade had heard of Colorado's reckless ride and had decided to back him up—or rather to get in on the kill. Daley watched for a tense moment then started clucking to his horse.

"You try getting that horse out of this sink," Colorado called out, "and I'll sure cut down on you and the horse both."

"Listen, hoppergrass," the trapped man yelled back in a rage. "I'm not telling it to you again. All you got to do is to ask that little desert rat, the one I saved from getting kicked to death. Just ask him did I give him the gold or not."

"He lined out slick and complete," Colorado answered readily. "'Tain't likely we'll find him before you're hung."

"Don't his lining out that way prove he's got the gold?" Daley barked out. "He'd gotten it through a killing, and even if it was his by rights, he decided to slope."

Colorado was impressed by this point. "What kettles me," he said in a lower tone so that he seemed to be talking to himself, "you've never yet shown a good streak in your whole life, Daley. You were as bronco as any of the Bad Bunch ten years ago when you were in your teens. And they said you raised hell at the Yuma Pen. Sure, I know you've tried giving it up on account of some girl—"

"The girl just road-branded me, learning who I am, so that kind of sentiment is out of it."

"All right. Bein' sentiment is out, we can cut this palaver until that posse gets here."

Daley's shadow showed him low-crouched, his hand outstretched until his horse came and nuzzled it. He held that position for an eternity, sizing up the desperate chance he was taking. Then he swung the pony in front of him. He kept on its offside as he thwacked it up the slope, but for a single moment as his horse wheeled he exposed himself.

Colorado beaded on him quickly, but with the minutest care, cutting him in his right hand. "It's all I'm aiming for, pilgrim, to shoot you loose from your gun."

Daley clutched his wrist and held it up over his head. The gun had clattered on rimrock and slid over into the sink. "You haven't slowed up on your draw, hoppergrass, even if they did put you on the shelf."

"Walk out thisaway."

COLORADO put handcuffs on him, then searched him. He searched his saddlebags, but found no gold. The fugitive had cached it somewhere no doubt. There was nothing Colorado could do about it. He had done enough, taking this hellion prisoner—and alive. It would be fun riding him into Uvade—another triumphant entry like the old days—Colorado without benefit of posse bringing a bad-man home.

They hit the trail, heading for that dust cloud which had oozed down to the bottoms. From the churned steam, a single rider emerged, ant-sized. The Uvade sheriff, if it was he, must have decided Colorado's method was the best—to ride without the dust of deputies.

"He's taking the same trail you did, looks like," Horse Daley drawled as they jogged on, stirrup to stirrup.

Colorado asked, puzzled: "How do you know what trail I took?"

"I cut it three times where the sand was crusted enough to leave prints. I stuck to silt and pebble washes myself so I wouldn't leave sign."

Colorado glanced quickly at the burned young face, the smoky eyes. What Daley had just said did not make sense somehow.

"I cut your trail again in the mesquite plain," Daley continued, "where your calico left a hair or two on the thorn. The prints were the same, too—a bent nail on the offhind shoe, a bar spreading another, a cracked hoof. Pretty old crowbait for riding shotgun, I figured. Thought you might be a prospector. That's why I kept on regardless, heading for Wolf Wells."

Colorado's mouth was open. He said under his breath: "So you do know how to read sign!"

"What do you think the Bad Bunch was doing when they were on the wing? Reading sign was our long suit."

"But you didn't know I was laying

for you at the water pocket. You were too dumb for that!"

"Then how do you figure I didn't let you ambush me? I had to go down there because my paint had to drink. So did I. You think I couldn't see where your wet boots picked up that surface sand after you'd filled your pack?"

"Then you saw the pack!" Colorado gasped. "Why didn't you ping it?"

"Still sot on calling me a Yaqui, aren't you, hoppergrass?"

"But you'd have had me hands down. I would've croaked without water. One hour and I couldn't have seen to draw a bead."

"I knew you'd stick it out, water or not, the way I've heard you did in the old days. If it'd been this new mail-order sheriff from Uvade, he wouldn't have stuck it out. He'd have let me go. But you would've just stuck there—and dried up. Seeing an old hoppergrass like you shrinking up in the sun isn't my idea of a good fight."

Colorado reined in. He had discovered suddenly that this young hellion was not a Yaqui. Yaquis like to watch from the cliff rims while their victims—prospectors, cavalrymen, homesteaders—go crazy with thirst. Then they attack.

"I've been plumb anxious to find just one good trait in you, Daley," he said. "And I've found it. You can't stand a little old coot getting kicked in the stomach when he's down, and you can't stand an old terrapin like me dying slow from thirst. It tallies up."

Horse Daley said carefully: "But still you're turning me over to this new sheriff for fair trial?"

"It wouldn't be a fair trial. There ain't another man on the range would believe in you. Unless that desert rat—the little feller—turned up and testified, you'd sure go back to Yuma for life, maybe for the hemp."

He cast a crow-footed squint across the sand dunes. That single horseman had grown from the size of an ant to a beetle.

"I'm taking the law in my own hands," said old Colorado. "It's a mosshorn's law maybe, but it goes this time."

He dismounted and opened his duffle bag. He unlocked the fugitive's cuffs and gave him a portion of beans and flapjack flour. "I'm keeping your gun, but you got your horse. South of the border, you look up Jake Hogan. He's got a casino at Nogales and'll give you a job. So now, pilgrim, you drift."

Daley answered slowly: "I'm thanking you—Sheriff."

COLORADO felt fine as he jogged through the sage. He did not know exactly what he would tell the Uvade sheriff. He wanted to tell how he had tried and acquitted Horse Daley through due process of his own range law. But he would be laughed at. It would be best to lie about it. He had never seen Daley at all—that was the best "out."

He felt so fine that his whole body tingled with life, so that, for the first time since he was on the ride, he discovered that he was hungry. Since he was in no hurry to meet that oncoming rider, he dismounted and built a fire of quick-burning mesquite twigs. The rider, seeing his smoke, would doubtless head straight for him. He boiled coffee, sliced a hunk of bacon, heated a can of beans.

The cautious clop of shod hoofs came up through the nearest draw. Colorado had a vague misgiving when he thought of facing the sheriff. Here was the new law, uncompromising, totally without sentiment. Colorado's law had condoned one deed because of the motives of another. What if he had made a mistake!

He got up and watched the rider pressing his horse through the draw. It was not the sheriff. It was a little man with red eyes and a neck as mottled and loose as a lizard's.

"Packin' in, pilgrim?"

The little man answered: "I'm trailing that wall-eyed crook, Horse Daley." His red eyes focused. "You're Colorado, ain't you? They said you'd headed down to trap Daley at a water-hole. So I stuck to your trail."

"What do you want Daley for?"

"He sat in on that game in the chow-cart when he didn't belong. I thought he was saving me from getting kicked because he shot at Lam Hooker's boots—"

"Sure. He's that kind of a ranny. I've found that out. I can tell 'em."

"Then what did he rob Hooker for?"

Colorado felt the first cold twist in his stomach. Had he guessed wrong?

"I lined out when the shooting started," said the little man, "but then I came back to the chowcart, figuring I could put in my claim on that gold dust. But Daley had snitched it and sloped."

"Say, look," Colorado gulped. "You mean he didn't slip the gold poke in your pocket?" He did not wait for the obvious answer. "Well, of all the sidewindin', triple-plaited liars!"

"You aren't tellin' me, Colorado, that you cut his trail and he sawed off a story like that—"

"Who, me? I ain't seen him!" Colorado rasped. "Think I'd let him saw anything off on me? Oh no!" He swung his saddle to his horse. "The triple-plaited, dehorned squirt!" He cinched up, then slowly uncinched. There was no chance of trapping Daley at the water-hole again. And there was no telling where he had gone now. A man who could read sign like Horse Daley knew how to trail without leaving sign that could be read. It would be a long, hopeless trail.

He tethered his horse. "Reckon we might as well make Indian camp and then trail home when it's cool. I'm plumb wore out."

He said no more. There was nothing more to be said. Except that a man gets along in years, his bones get stiff, and so do his brains. He was a mosshorn. And his law was for the old hell-to-spit, hard-riding kids, the wild ones, the ones that just needed some bucking straps to be tamed. These new crooks were not men. They were pack rats. Let the new sheriff tend to them. Colorado was through. He slept.

IN HIS parched stirring under the day's end heat, his mind kept working and circling back. Horse Daley had shown one good trait—a great trait. Heat and thirst would not let Colorado forget that Daley had not pinged that can. There was no remote doubt that he had thought of it and could have done it. He had kept Lam Hooker's gold, yes. But that might have been because he knew he was in a bad jam, blasting him that way. No one would give him the benefit of a decent motive. His girl had turned him down because of his past. The track crew foreman refused him a job for the same reason. So—

Colorado stopped thinking about it. He was not only getting too old to think straight, he was getting too sentimental. "The sidewindin' penny-ante varmint!" he muttered half in his sleep.

Naturally enough he awoke at the first tinkle of a stone and the shock on the ground with the coming of a rider. He just lay there staring at the glow of sunset, shooting across to the eastern mesas. He heard a voice somewhere behind the brush, laconic and lazy.

"I was looking for that old hopper-grass used to be sheriff." It was Horse Daley's voice, although Colorado could not believe it. "But finding you here is just as good."

The other voice said: "Listen, Daley, please, I—"

"I'm not going to hurt you," Daley said to the scared little rabbit. "So listen. If you meet up with Colorado ask him why I blasted Lam Hooker. He knows. It made me see red, you getting kicked thataway. I'd have made that bruiser dance even if he was kicking a dog. Keeping the gold was an after-hunch. The hell with it. Here it is."

The runt's voice bleated: "You mean —you're letting me keep this, Daley?"

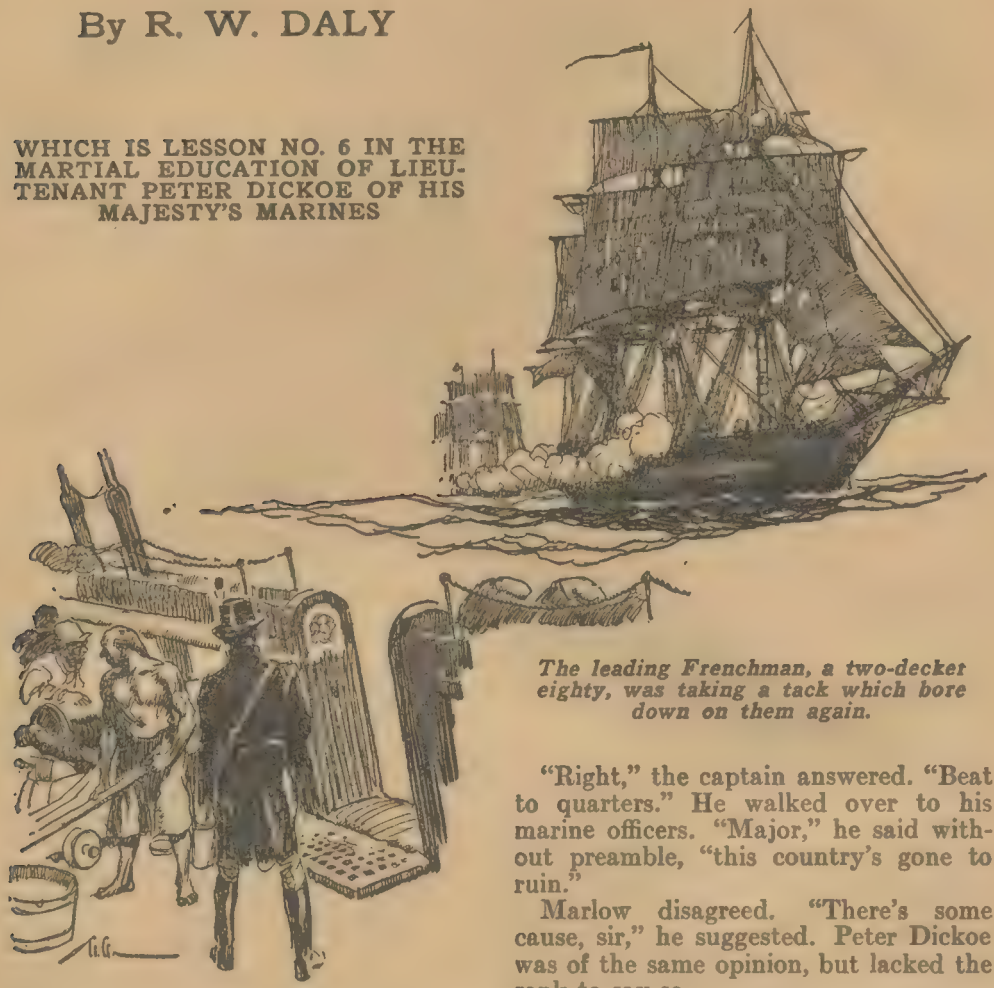
"I ain't making this play because of you, you little wart. I'm making it because it's according to Hoyle. Colorado's the only one who's fool enough to think I could make one straight play. But I'm not letting him be the fool this time. You tell him I'm taking that job south of the border. Maybe it'll be better than the long trail. And listen, little two-spot, when you tell him, call him 'Sheriff.'"

Colorado did not get up. The red faded on the eastern mesas under the evening star. Through his half-closed lids, he saw the rays of light spreading out like the brightly scoured silver points of that worn-out, half-forgotten badge of his.

ATTENTION TO ORDERS

By R. W. DALY

WHICH IS LESSON NO. 6 IN THE MARTIAL EDUCATION OF LIEUTENANT PETER DICKOE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MARINES



The leading Frenchman, a two-decker eighty, was taking a tack which bore down on them again.

WHEN the news was reported to Captain Neely, he cursed with all the colorful vehemence of twenty years at sea, scandalized the midshipman who quaked before him, and ran onto his quarterdeck, where the first lieutenant awaited his coming.

"What's this, Mr. Healy?" the captain demanded belligerently. "Again?"

Silently, Healy proffered his superior the use of a telescope. Neely put the glass to his eye and trained it shorewards. After a minute, he lowered the instrument. "Y'know what this means," he remarked grimly.

"Aye aye, sir," Healy replied. "Now?"

"Right," the captain answered. "Beat to quarters." He walked over to his marine officers. "Major," he said without preamble, "this country's gone to ruin."

Marlow disagreed. "There's some cause, sir," he suggested. Peter Dickoe was of the same opinion, but lacked the rank to say so.

"Nonsense!" Neely snapped. "Not after Spithead. If the King pardons these men, he's insane."

"What are we going to do, sir?" Marlow asked, as Peter turned to answer the summons of the drum to quarters.

"Our orders are to join Duncan," the captain replied, "and join him we will, mutiny or no mutiny."

Inspecting his marines at their stations, Peter thought it ironic that H. M. S. *Fidelité* should clear her skirts of a mutiny at Spithead, only to stick her bowsprit into another Fleet mutiny at the Nore. England was at war with France, Spain and Holland, which made defection on the part of her navy some-

what embarrassing. The coastline from the Thames to the Tweed was grievously vulnerable to attack. Admitting that the seamen had good cause to be discontented with their life, he considered they had chosen an awkward time to become vocal. Having been in the grip of the rebellion at Spithead, the crew of H. M. S. *Fidelité* were now anxious to have the incident forgotten. So it would be with every ship that flew the white ensign. In the meantime, however, there was no guarantee that England's enemies would graciously permit her to adjust the differences outstanding between officers and men.

"All present, sir," Anderson reported.

Peter returned the salute. "At ease, Sergeant," he said. He wondered what Neely was going to do—if the indomitable little captain would use his seventy-four guns in an attempt to compel some of the rebels to return to their duty. Neely was fully capable of blasting at his own brother, if his brother were a traitor to his King. But if Neely hoped himself to clean up the harbor, he was biting off more than he could conveniently fit into his mouth. Peter made some such remark to Major Marlow, when the commandant came over to the file of marines.

"Mr. Dickoe," Marlow retorted, "don't place too much reliance on numbers. They don't always count."

Anchoring beside a battery that had been thrown up by the regiments sent to quarantine the mutineers, Captain Neely went ashore to confer with the authorities from Sheerness. Every major ship in the harbor carried the red banner. It was inconceivable to Peter that Admiral Duncan's flagship could have succumbed to the pestilence of disaffection. If seamen ever worshiped an officer, they idolized Duncan, a giant of a man, who had a heart for his crew, and had, indeed, written years before to the Admiralty recommending the changes for which the rebels were now striking.

THE *Fidelité's* men stood by their guns while their captain determined whether or not they would have to use them against a vessel of the Royal Navy. Should the order to fire be given, Peter doubted that obedience would be enthusiastic. Every eye on the quarterdeck was on Neely's erect figure as he came over the rail and walked majestically to the helm.

"Up anchor, Mr. Healy," he said.

Relieved, Peter dismissed the marines and went below to the wardroom, where he could hope to hear the news from Major Marlow. After half a bottle, his superior stalked into the large messroom, and dropped into a chair nearby. Peter unobtrusively pulled up beside the major, offered him a glass, and casually remarked: "Glad we didn't have to move in there, sir."

Moodily, Marlow sipped the wine. "Our orders are to join Duncan," he said. "And Duncan isn't at the Nore."

"D'ye know where he is, sir?"

Marlow smiled. "He's on the way to fight the Dutch," he replied. "He has his own seventy-four and a fifty-gun ship. Those are all that remained loyal of his fleet."

Peter smiled in turn. "Ye're jesting, sir," he claimed. "D' ye really know where he is?"

"No," Marlow admitted, "but I can guess. About now, he is heaving to off Texel Island."

Peter abandoned his quest for information. He had long since learned that when the captain or the major decided to keep a secret, there was no artifice that could break their resolution. Marlow customarily discouraged questions by giving preposterous answers. Peter thought that Marlow's latest evasion was poor humor, although the very notion of one lone ship-of-the-line dauntlessly essaying to challenge the entire might of a sea-faring nation like Holland made him suddenly roar with laughter.

The major let him have his laugh, before precipitating a discussion of the exploits of an amazing chap named Buonaparte, who had been thrashing huge Austrian armies down in Italy with a regularity that made the major decide that the fellow was possibly as good as General Lazare Hoche, which was saying a great deal, for everyone knew that Hoche was the best general in the Armies of the Republic.

Patiently hearing Marlow to the tedious end, Peter casually asked again: "Where is Duncan?" The major stuck to his story and Peter went to bed longing for the day when he could tell a major his candid opinion.

Shortly after midnight, Peter woke up. Not because he wished to wake up, but because his hammock suddenly swung violently and pitched him onto the deck of his cabin, where his head missed the edge of his seachest. He tried to stand up, and discovered that the deck was at a steep angle. Estimating the degree of inclination, he arrived at the disconcerting conclusion that the *Fidelité* was practically careened on her side, and determined to investigate the cause.

Ultimately arriving on the quarterdeck, after being battered against bulkheads and companionways by the bucking motion of the heeled ship, Peter found that the *Fidelité* had entered the North Sea and been welcomed by one of the gales for which the area was famous. Wind and rain lashed the stout oak of the ship-of-the-line, and Peter's shirt and breeches were drenched in an instant.

Staggering to the helm, where Captain Neely hoarsely trumpeted directions aimed to drive the *Fidelité's* bows into the power of the tempest, and riding under bare poles, Peter was summarily invited to lend the hard muscles of his hundred and ninety pounds to the task of keeping the rudder steady.

An occasional wave raced ahead of its companions and playfully struck the *Fidelité's* beak, dumping its surplus over the waist and crushing an unfortunate sailor or two. The foretopgallantmast, caught by a press of wind, split under the onslaught and crashed its yard down onto the forecastle. Not to be outdone, the maintopgallantmast shortly after plunged away from its station, injuring a half-dozen seamen on whom it landed.

"Hadn't we better put her about?" Healy screamed into the gale.

"No!" Neely imperiously shouted in reply. "We're just off Yarmouth. If we ran before it, we'd pile up. And remember—we've got to join Duncan!"

Clinging with throbbing arms to a spoke on the wheel, Peter damned Duncan as well as the mischance that had placed the *Fidelité* so close to the coast that she couldn't run free before the wind, whereby damage could be kept at a minimum. This wasn't any time to be thinking of orders. It was the time to prepare oneself for eternity. Slitting his eyes against the stinging needles of rain, he found in the blackness of the night a belief in Hell, and wished at all costs to avoid a sojourn in that establishment.

AS IT usually does every twenty-four hours, dawn came. With the gradual approach of light, the wind skulked away, leaving the *Fidelité* in peace at last, a few feet of water in her hold, stays slackened by the rain, and a pair of topgallantmasts to be shipped.

Peter dragged himself to a cold breakfast in the wardroom, where Major Marlow blithesomely munched on biscuit and passed a word of cheer to his haggard brother officers. He had not, it seemed, been seriously disturbed by the storm. Scowling, Peter demanded a pot of tea or cocoa, and was informed that the ship's fires were out, as a precaution against the weather, and a hot drink was not possible for at least another hour, unless the lieutenant cared for some brandy.

About to commit the indiscretion of drinking before eleven, Peter was saved by the shattering tattoo of the drum beating all hands to stations. Groaningly, he got his small arms out of his cabin, did not take time to slip on his tunic, and pulled himself onto the quarterdeck, strapping his broad swordbelt over his shoulder, and thrusting his pistol into the band of his breeches.

The marines were already by the rail, and Major Marlow acknowledged his arrival by the acid remark: "Mr. Dickoe, ye're improperly dressed!"

Peter wished to make an exasperated retort dictated by fatigue, realized that the major couldn't very well pass over his unseemly attire without hurting discipline, and took the reproof stoically, falling in beside Sergeant Anderson, where he had an opportunity to observe the *Fidelité's* latest difficulty.

Off her starboard bow, three stacks of

canvas rose against the low line of France. Peter caught his breath. In her present condition, the *Fidelité* wasn't fit to fight one ship, let alone three. Captain Neely, however, did not share his lack of confidence, sending the marines to expedite the draining of the hold, so that some of the seamen could be freed for the feverish hoisting of spare spars to the fore and mainmasts.

For all the world like an Egyptian slave-driver, Peter urged his men to pump vigorously, primarily because he wished to return to the quarterdeck, from which platform he could observe the maneuvers of the other ships.

"They couldn't be French, sir," Sergeant Anderson said to Peter.

Thinking there was more hope than conviction in the sergeant's manner, Peter nevertheless agreed. "No," he said, "they couldn't be."

Sweating at the leather pumps, the marines hosed the bilge into the sea, lightening the *Fidelité,* so that she gradually regained her buoyancy. Abandoning the attempt to estimate the cubic feet of water that foamed over the *Fidelité's* side, Peter occasionally looked up the sickening height of the mainmast, where seamen nimbly labored to sling a spar and yard temporarily into position.

A sharp breeze whipped through his silk shirt, and reminded him that he had been soaked for more than seven hours. He was happy to accept a cup of the grog which the captain thoughtfully broke out for the people, and, with a few bites of food inside him, would have felt almost human.

"Fine stuff, that," he said appreciatively to the sergeant.

"It's rum, sir," Anderson replied, and kept a straight face.

Peter was about to give a lecture upon the impropriety of puns, when Major Marlow came down the gangway, and asked: "How's the work coming, Mr. Dickoe?"

"Practically finished, sir."

"Good," said the major. "Don't take too much of that grog—it isn't the best in the world."

"Are they French, sir?" Peter asked, giving the cup to his sergeant, who noticed that only a few drops were left.

"Two of the line and a frigate," the major replied. "Charmin'."

Peter frowned at his sweating marines. "Will we bring them to action, sir?"

"They have the wind. It's their choice, not ours," Marlow answered philosophically.

THE topmasts and yards temporarily secured, and canvas unfurled, the extra hands among the topmen returned to the waist, where they took the pumps from the marines, who were thus able to go up the gangway to their proper post.

Peter observed that the three French ships had formed a line, and were bearing down on the *Fidelité.* Captain Neely scuttled his habitual procedure of waiting until an opponent was within musket shot range before opening up, astounding his divisional lieutenants by ordering them to bombard the oncoming ships, which were more than a mile from the muzzles of the *Fidelité's* thirty-two pounder gundeck batteries.

It was several minutes before splashes stopped funneling over and short of the enemy. Through a telescope lent him by Lieutenant Snape, Peter was greatly pleased to witness the appearance of holes in the leading Frenchman's canvas. As the accurate gunnery of the *Fidelité* raked fore-and-aft through the first ship, she abruptly hauled her wind, and turned the line onto a course parallel to the Englishman's, so that the three could reciprocate the cannonading.

Captain Neely moodily paced his quarterdeck, spoke a kindly word or so to the carronade crews who couldn't use their short guns until the range closed considerably, and looked pensively every now and then at the French.

"We'll be all right if they keep that distance," Major Marlow remarked, and Peter agreed, for the Republican marksmanship was poor, their gunners unequal to the hard-trained gunners under Captain Neely, who had accustomed them to blowing up empty water casks for target practice. "See that?" the major said calmly.

Peter watched the maintopmast of the second ship-of-the-line go over the side, and was delighted when the frigate fol-

lowing her, forging ahead because of their disproportionate speeds, ran on board her larboard batteries, screening them from blasting at the *Fidelité*, as well as inextricably mixing yards and riggings, so that the tangled ships lost way.

Spontaneously, the *Fidelité's* crew exulted in three cheers, in which Peter could have joined, until he saw that the leading Frenchman was taking a tack which bore down on them again. The enemy was a two-decker eighty, and could throw out a broadside some two hundred and fifty pounds larger than the *Fidelité* could. Even at that, Peter would not have worried, had he not seen with his own eyes that Captain Neely was disturbed by the situation. It took a mammoth disaster to evoke any emotion from that salt-toughened skipper, who was ordinarily far above the petty qualms of mankind.

Healy interrupted the captain's promenade to remark that the odds weren't too bad, and was disconcerted by Neely's harassed rejoinder: "But what will Duncan think?"

For himself, Peter was sure that Duncan was a reasonable man and would understand that a ship crippled in a storm wasn't in the best shape to flee from a fight forced upon her by superior numbers.

"A point to larboard," Neely said to the master.

Peter had a pang of hope—perhaps Neely was going to try and run for it after all. The *Fidelité* might be able to raise some friendly English ship if she were to beat back towards Yarmouth. Neely, however, kept his purposes to himself and the *Fidelité* on her slightly changed course.

Able to devote their fire to one vessel, the English guncrews pounded death into the sightly hull of the enemy two-decker. Almost every gun that screeched in recoil over the rough planking of the decks sent a ball which found a lodging-place. The men who manned the Republican were possessed of an ideal and devotion that held them to their posts throughout the carnage, even though their spirit could not compensate for mediocre seamanship and gunnery, resulting from a lack of discipline.

As the Frenchman took the *Fidelité* within a forty-five degree arc of her gunports, she warmly expressed her thanks for the mauling to which she had been treated. Shot whined through the bulwarks and upper works of the English liner, splintering wood and men with indifferent irresistibility. Marlow ordered the marines to lie down. Peter wondered why they weren't sent up into the fighting tops, where they should be if Neely intended to grapple their powerful adversary, now rounding their quarter.

Neely casually calculated the progress of the eighty-gun Republican, as the powerful ship drove at the *Fidelité's* wake, obviously contemplating a desertion of the weather gauge in return for the pleasure of a broadside through the Englishman's stern at a range of two hundred yards. The eighty passed the maximum traverse of Lieutenant Healy's batteries, and took advantage of the enforced silence to pour in a staggered salvo that wounded the *Fidelité's* sturdy fabric. Then the Frenchman was quiet, spuming straight ahead. In a few minutes, her broadside would bear full on the British ship's counter, and her captain wanted all of his guns to be loaded in compliment to the lady.

"All hands lie down!" Neely trumpeted.

OBEDIENTLY, everyone with the exception of Neely, Major Marlow, and the men at the wheel, dropped to the deck, reducing their bodies to the minimum of exposure. His face against the comforting solidity of oak, Peter watched the eyes of his superior officers, and was able to tell by their movement when the broadside was coming. Some impulse raised him to a knee, and rolled him into their legs just as a flailing curtain of grape screamed through the flimsy counter and killed every standing man on the quarterdeck. The helmsmen disintegrated into ugly lumps.

Scrambling to his feet, Peter lunged for the spinning wheel as the seaway drove the *Fidelité* to larboard, and, with the aid of two marines, managed to get the ship under steerage control. Recovering his trumpet and stance, Captain

Neely shouted all hands to their stations, set the course close-hauled to starboard, and tacked away from the enemy, who, having misappraised the *Fidelité's* course into the wind, was unable to come around quickly enough to grasp her as anticipated.

Neely had the pleasure of a spurt of six hundred yards before the Frenchman could reload and shoot, and was very happy that he had been thoughtful enough to shake out a heavy press of canvas. By the time the eighty was able to parallel the *Fidelité's* course, she was three miles away and safe. Much as Captain Neely disliked to disappoint an enemy, he had his orders and knew how to obey them.

Finally able to have some hot food, Peter contentedly walked into the wardroom after he had changed his bedraggled clothes. He ate for an hour before he paid any attention to the conversation that animated the *Fidelité's* lieutenants, who glowed with joy and wine after the successful engagement.

Healy audibly regretted the misfortune that had taken the *Fidelité* away from three French ships, expressing the confidence that she could have easily trounced them if it wasn't for her duty of joining Duncan.

"Y' know," Peter laughed, "ye're making this sound like some kind of game—instead of war."

But he didn't laugh one bright morning in June, when the *Fidelité* at last fulfilled her orders and dropped anchor abeam the *Venerable,* flagship of Adam Duncan, Admiral of the Blue, for the *Venerable* was serenely situated fore-and-aft across the southern and main channel of the Texel, in such wise that her hull almost completely blocked the narrow exit from the harbor, wherein fifteen ships-of-the-line, seventy-five smaller craft, and more than thirty thousand soldiers under General Hoche awaited a favorable wind to sail against England.

As Captain Neely stepped into his gig to present himself belatedly to his admiral, Peter strode to the wheel, where Lieutenant Morris was writing down the information that fluttered up and down the halyards of the *Venerable,* whose signal officer was overjoyed to behold another ship-of-the-line come to share the *Venerable's* prospect of glorious immortality. The fifty cruised outside.

"We have taken the depth of the channel," the bright flags said, "and will stop them even if sunk."

At that moment, the leadsman reported to Lieutenant Healy that the *Fidelité* was swinging in a scant eight fathoms of water. If either of the two English ships were holed and sent to the bottom, her ensigns would ripple unconquered over the surface of the water. Not that Peter relished the possibility, but he did like to know the facts.

Glancing up from the signal-book, Morris noticed Peter. "Jolly fine day, wot?" he said matter-of-factly, and hastened to obey Healy's orders to supervise the bringing up of shot for the racks and silken cartridges for the tubs, as the *Fidelité* stripped for the action that would be hers the moment the Dutch decided to come out and fight.

Peter found Major Marlow writing in the wardroom. "Sir," he said, "I apologize for not believing you about the *Venerable.*"

"Hmm," Marlow murmured abstractedly. "Now y' know why we had to join him."

Indeed, Peter did. For the weeks he had held his station, Admiral Duncan had been the sole defense of the security of the east coast of England. While fleets mutinied, and struck for pay and privileges, the grizzled old admiral had quietly gone to his post, determined to keep the faith with the sovereign who entrusted him with the command of a high seas fleet. At any time, he was prepared to sacrifice himself and his ship for the honor of the Navy and the protection of Great Britain. It was officers of his stamp who gave their country the possession of Neptune's trident. He could not be called courageous, because the word was inadequate to describe the supreme *sang-froid* of posting himself alone at the only point where disaster threatened to spring out at an unready England.

"Yes, sir," Peter said. "What do you think of our chances?"

The major solemnly held up the sheet

on which he had been scrawling. "Mr. Dickoe," he said quietly. "I haven't written home for many, many years."

Peter couldn't resist a tight grin. "Earlier in the week, sir, you told me numbers didn't count."

"When ninety ships encounter two, Mr. Dickoe, we are no longer in the realm of numbers."

Peter was depressed. "What can we do, sir?"

Major Marlow had long since thought of that. "We can try and exhaust the wardroom's liquor supply," he said. "Now, don't disturb me any more."

IT IS either a commentary on the intelligence of the Dutch or the intrepidity of the English, but Admiral De Winter did not come to blast the two undaunted British ships out of the channel. It is possible that he looked upon them as a snare to entice him to the clutches of a superior force which lurked just over the horizon, and Admiral Adam Duncan did not violate any rule of war when he encouraged the delusion by keeping a single frigate that had joined him constantly busy in the distance flying signals as though to a huge fleet. He was a Scotsman.

However, the *Circe* did her work exceedingly well, although her commander permitted himself to be carried away by the sport when he counted up thirty-seven of the line, many of which, had Admiral De Winter known the distribution of the Royal Navy, were in the Mediterranean or the Indian Ocean.

Every instant, the crews of the two British liners were ready to leap to their guns and work them until the supplies of ammunition, firing platforms, or men were gone. The strain of awaiting death brought out debonair spirits, and Peter Dickoe never enjoyed himself more in the wardroom than he did those June weeks of 1797, squatting in the entrance of Texel Island's harbor. The officers carried themselves as though each minute was to be their last, much in the vein that the gay nobility of the *Decameron* whiled away the time that separated them from the plague's ravages.

Their jollity took a sounder turn, the day in middle June when the *Circe* ran up the signal of a ship-of-the-line belonging to the North Sea Fleet, which actually came over the horizon. She was the first to rejoin Duncan's flag after the settlement of the mutiny at the Nore. It was a joyous hour when the admiral was able to abandon his perilous anchorage and drop out to sea to take up his command of a real fighting force that was equal enough to that of the Dutch. The British were in a position to handle General Hoche's prospects of invading Ireland or England.

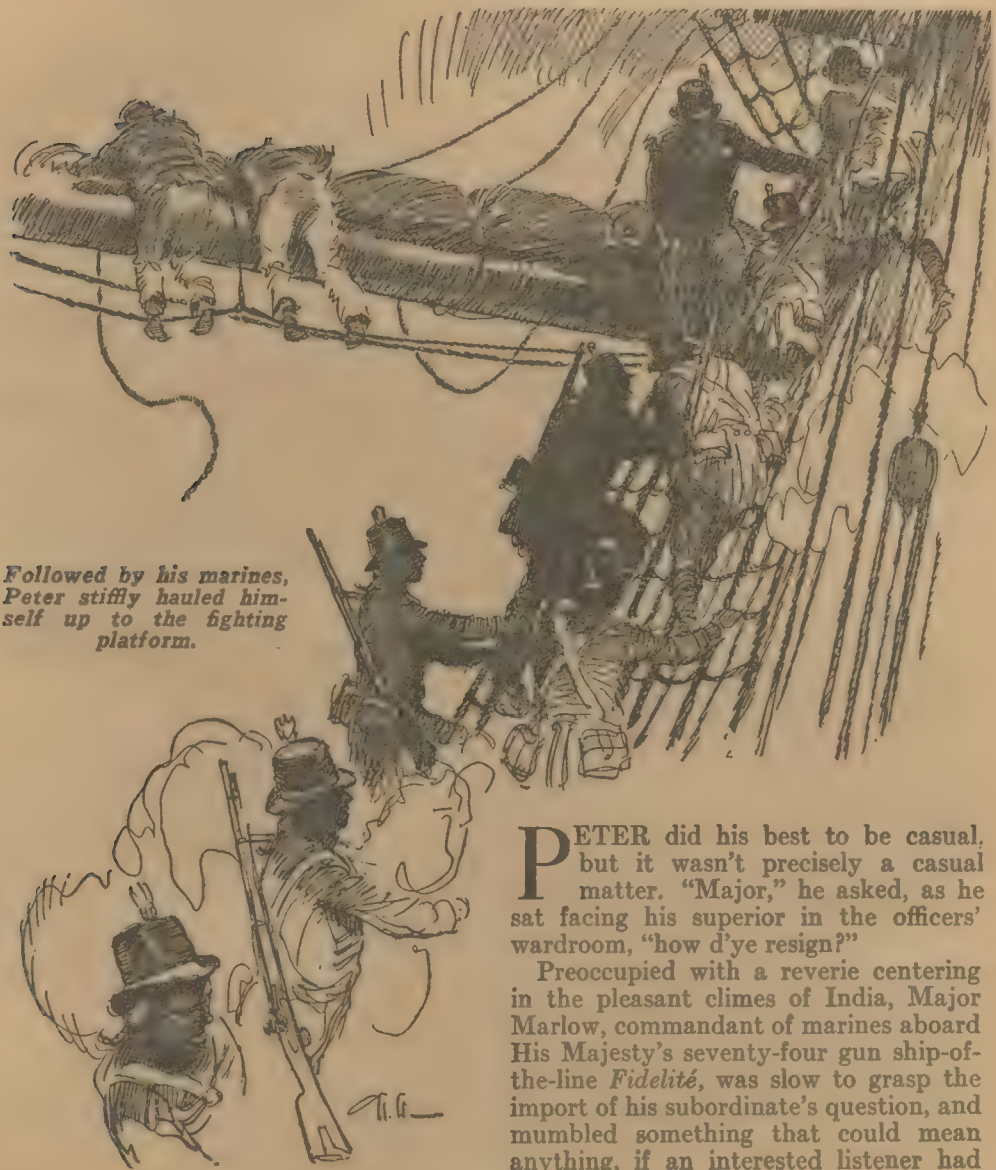
The single person aboard the *Fidelité* to complain was Major Marlow. As he explained to Peter: "I wasted the time to write a letter home, and we succeeded in drinking all the liquor in the mess."

Peter was able to console him by the suggestion that the letter could still be sent home, while the purser could probably be approached on the subject of selling a hogshead of rum.

THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME

By R. W. DALY

BEING THE FINAL LESSON IN THE MARTIAL EDUCATION OF LIEUTENANT PETER DICKOE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MARINES



Followed by his marines, Peter stiffly hauled himself up to the fighting platform.

PETER did his best to be casual, but it wasn't precisely a casual matter. "Major," he asked, as he sat facing his superior in the officers' wardroom, "how d'ye resign?"

Preoccupied with a reverie centering in the pleasant climes of India, Major Marlow, commandant of marines aboard His Majesty's seventy-four gun ship-of-the-line *Fidelité*, was slow to grasp the import of his subordinate's question, and mumbled something that could mean anything, if an interested listener had

the patience to piece words out of the syllables. He was preoccupied with cursing the weather. October is a foul month at best. October in the North Sea is incredible. Major Marlow had been around the Horn, and preferred even that boisterous passage to the steady, chill blasts that chopped waves and beat through portlids to make the wardroom the same temperature as the quarterdeck. "What!" he roared suddenly. "Resign?"

"Right, sir," Peter said.

On either side of a frostbitten nose, Major Marlow's eyes smoked like linstocks. "Why?"

Peter shrugged helplessly.

"Don't y' like the food? Or is it the company?" Marlow was inclined to be facetious. Youth was always melancholy in the autumn. He could remember when he had been the same way.

Food and company weren't among the many intangible reasons influencing Peter's question. When he intimated he didn't know why he wanted to leave the service, he was guilty of a half-truth: he was at once bored with the life and skeptical of its genuine utility. In the four years he had been with the Fleet, he had been the direct cause of killing many men. He had begun to wonder why, and the absence of a rational answer disturbed him. He had plenty of time to think about it—God knew that the days dragged slowly for a marine lieutenant. "It isn't that, Major," he said. How could he explain that he thought his present occupation not only a waste of time but useless to civilization?

"Hmm," the major murmured. "Well, y' state it in writing."

"Like this?" Peter asked, thrusting a letter across the little drinking table.

Thoughtfully, the major glanced at the document, cleared his throat, and said: "Y' don't resign the Service when your country's at war, Mr. Dickoe." He paused. "It isn't the honorable thing, y' know. Some people call it cowardice. Some commanders would place you under arrest and call for a court-martial."

As if to lend emphasis to his remarks, the drums imperatively beat all hands to quarters. Relieved, Marlow said hastily, "We'll finish this later," stuffed the letter into a pocket, and preceded the other officers to the companionway.

Gloomily, Peter hurried to get small arms from his cabin. A hundred times that week, the *Fidelité* had stood to stations, on the alert for a phantom Dutch fleet. He was tired of it. In fact, he told himself, cramming paper pistol cartridges into a pocket, he was tired of the Navy. Slinging a wide sword belt over a broad shoulder, he tried to remember what had ever brought him into the marines, and succeeded in recalling that his two elder brothers had died to make him the last of his family, and thus, automatically, a servant of the King, since every generation had to have its Dickoe under the banner of St. George.

"Beg pardon, sir," said a carpenter's mate, rapping on the bulkhead. Wordlessly, Peter left his quarters which were to be torn down until the *Fidelité* returned to normal duty, when the persevering carpenters would resurrect the partitions that sectioned the hull.

ON DECK, the major was dressing the marines into line, and agreeably surrendered that task to Peter, whose voice, hardened by wine and discipline, rasped commands as sharp as the wind which sportingly laced through doublets and tunics and made the faces of the marines as red as their winter coats. Finally, the fifty-odd soldiers were in place, ammunition pouches full, and Peter was able to report them ready for service.

"Very good, Mr. Dickoe," Marlow said, walking him aside from Captain Neely, who was blithely imparting orders to his lieutenants. At the rail, he remarked: "I think we're going to have some action."

Following the major's hand towards the hazy yellow line of the Netherlands, Peter barely discerned a score of ships inshore, beating along with the wind abeam. It was Vice-Admiral de Winter's fleet from the Texel, for whom the English had been waiting since the previous July, through weary weeks in the

North Sea, which had, at times, sent storm-battered individuals of Admiral Duncan's squadrons back to Yarmouth to refit.

Peter looked about him to the fifteen ships that accompained the *Fidelité*. "We must be outnumbered," he commented. "How many are there?" The Dutch vessels were bunched and difficult to distinguish in the screening murk.

Major Marlow shrugged indifferently. "Count 'em when we've captured 'em," he replied.

"Why the deuce did they have to come out?" Peter demanded peevishly. "General Hoche's army was disbanded. The grand invasion of Ireland or the British Isles was postponed."

"They seek the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth," Marlow said cryptically. "They want to fight—and you know our admiral. He'll oblige 'em."

Half-blinded by the misty sea, stung by spray, and swayed by the *Fidelité's* roll, Peter couldn't fathom the psychology of knighthood, which exulted in mere test of strength. He demanded at least the pretense of a motive before coming to mortal grips. If the Dutchmen were threatening to bombard the York coast, well and good, have at 'em. If the Dutchmen were just looking for a fight, let 'em look elsewhere.

First Lieutenant Healy paused for a word before going below to his batteries. "Cold, Peter?" he asked cheerfully.

"No," Peter said.

Healy cocked his head towards the dimly perceptible enemy. "There's a severe Winter approaching," he grinned, "but I'll keep up a good fire."

Annoyed by the comradely pleasantry that was intended for humor, Peter let the remark and lieutenant go without comment.

Marlow coughed and said: "Have y' written—" He did not need to finish the question.

Peter shook his head. He had abandoned the practice of writing a farewell letter home before an engagement, primarily because he hadn't yet been killed and was thus able to reread what he had scrawled to his family before deciding if he should send the missive on to them. He hadn't sent them any. Each had been filled with a conventional sentiment he didn't feel. If he died, he wouldn't die happy in the knowledge that he had made the world a happier place in which to live. Any consolation would come from the simple fact that his death would mean that his father would be able a little longer to continue getting wine from Portugal. He'd die for a standard of living, but not an ideal. That is, if he had to die.

"What kind of fighters are the Dutch?" he asked.

"Charmin'," Marlow replied with respect in the adjective. We'll have a hundred balls through the hull before the sun sets."

Under that sanguine expectation, Peter returned to his marines and waited for the collision of two battle fleets. Admiral Adam Duncan didn't waste time hoisting signals to form a prim line, preferring to bear in two ragged columns directly down upon the Dutch. It was not the most masterful maneuver, exposing the leading ships to heavy fire from the mutually supporting single file of the enemy, but it was the quickest way to come to grips, which was Admiral Duncan's obliging acceptance of Admiral de Winter's invitation.

IN THE starboard column, the *Fidelité* was behind the *Monarch*, seventy-four guns, of Vice-Admiral Richard Onslow, second in command of the English fleet. With the speed that constant practice had ingrained into her crew, she was ready for the fortunes of the morning.

"Cleared for action, sir," a lieutenant reported to Captain Neely.

Having long since observed that fact, Captain Neely said: "Very good. Stand by."

Peter looked at his marines. They stood rigidly in platoon front, their faces indifferent, that being the only expression permitted them. The future was none of their concern. To think about the possibilities that could fill the interim before supper could not benefit their equanimity. It was best not to imagine the violent forms in which death

visited men in the Royal Navy. Death came quickly enough, without the folly of anticipation.

"Beastly weather," he murmured to Sergeant Anderson.

That grim, hard-shelled veteran respectfully smiled at his officer, whom he regarded with an emotion scandalously akin to idolatry, because Peter was that rare bird among officers, a man who could take a tactful suggestion from an inferior. Then, too, Peter had once had the pleasure of preserving Anderson's continuance in life, for which Anderson, not being in too much haste to learn first-hand if there really is a Heaven, was duly grateful. "Aye aye, sir," he replied.

"This your first fleet action?" Peter asked. He was not genuinely talkative, but the cold had clamped upon his stomach, and he felt nervous, fitful. War was a bad business. He had thought so earlier in the morning when he had scrawled his resignation. Now he was positive. This wasn't the life—or death—for him.

"No, sir," Anderson replied modestly. "I was at the Saints."

Peter thoughtfully studied his subordinate, as he recalled that the Battle of the Saints, fought fifteen years ago in a war of "finality," had proved to be only an episode in the seemingly interminable struggle between France and England. "How is it?"

"Same as a ship engagement, sir," Anderson answered, "only more so."

The Dutch, enchanted by the bows-on target presented them by the English, opened up. Even at that extremely long range, some gunner had the skill or luck to send a shot through the rigging of the *Fidelité,* knocking a topman off a yard, and showering his dismembered fragments onto the spardeck. Stolidly, the marines stared at the pitiful remnants of what had split-seconds previously been a man. There would have been some animal satisfaction in firing the bow-chasers in reply, but Captain Neely never wasted ammunition, and Peter knew from experience that the order to touch linstocks to breeches wouldn't come until the *Fidelité* was close enough to an enemy for Captain Neely to count the buttons on her captain's coat.

The English fleet lumbered towards its foe. Scant months before, those wide-bottomed Dutch ships had been a menace to the security of England. In June, they had ridden at anchor in the Texel awaiting a favorable moment to slip cables and bear the army of General Lazare Hoche down upon the English coast, while the Royal Navy feebly wrestled in the throes of mass mutiny. Thanks to the almost single-handed valor of Admiral Duncan, the Dutch hadn't grasped any of a dozen chances to transport the Republican troops, who had been disbanded for other armies. The menace was gone—the Royal Navy was once again holding the sea. But so that the menace of hostile ships based on the Dutch coast might never again threaten British domination of the Channel, Admiral Duncan's ships strained every strake to come to grips.

When the major beckoned him to approach, Peter went to that officer's side. He had to push his way through a group of excited lieutenants, who had just received final instructions from Neely.

"Sir?"

Marlow walked him back to the taffrail, where they could see the boiling wake of the *Fidelité,* and observe the plunging, massive beaks of the broad-bosomed ships that followed her. "Now, what's this about resigning?" the major asked shrewdly. "A girl?"

More Dutch metal flew through the air and scored in the *Fidelité's* upper works. Officers and seamen glanced up, their faces variously affected by the exhibition of Dutch gunnery. Only the marines remained absolutely calm. Peter motioned to Anderson to have them lie down.

"Sorry, sir," Peter said, tightening the corners of his mouth. "I must have been bored."

MARLOW surveyed him carelessly, with a thoroughness that Peter had come to consider almost supernatural. "With all Europe virtually ranged against her, Mr. Dickoe, England desperately needs this victory."

Peter agreed.

"To win victories, she needs seasoned men—even if they are bored."

With that observation, Peter likewise had no quarrel. He acknowledged the inference to himself. "Is that all, sir?"

"Not quite," Marlow replied, his eyes chaining Peter's. "I also agree with you that it's futile, puerile, and inconclusive—but there's a war on, and it must be fought." He hesitated long enough for his words to be comprehended. "Take thirty men into the maintop."

Thinking that, of all places, war in the maintop was particularly futile, Peter saluted, and returned to Anderson. "Tell off thirty men, Sergeant," he requested. As the men were stepping forward to follow him, a double-headed shot playfully cut down part of the mizen shrouds. Involuntarily thinking of the havoc that same aceumulation of rusty metal could wreak upon a man's interior economy, Peter shivered. There was frost on the hand-scrubbed deck, which made the polished wood gleam like jewels.

"It's cold, sir," Anderson said, falling in on Peter's left.

"You stay here," Peter retorted.

"Is the lieutenant going—" Anderson asked, significantly lifting his eyes to the fighting top.

"The lieutenant is," Peter said. "*Ave atque vale,* Anderson."

"You know I don't speak French, sir," the sergeant grumbled reproachfully.

Peter was still chuckling over that remark as he stiffly hauled himself up the mainmast shrouds, doing his best to keep his sword and pistol from snagging in the rough, tarred ropes. Once on the wide fighting platform, he felt better, although some hundred feet above the gray-green, pitching waves that kept the *Fidelité* from the bottom of the North Sea.

Sergeant Burke, in command of the top, was delighted to have Peter supersede him, as all non-commissioned officers enjoy the presence of an officer who is, by virtue of a piece of parchment, omniscient. "A bit raw, sir," he said, wrinkling his face in distaste.

Fearing that the wind which blew abaft the *Fidelité* was transforming his back into a grater of ice, Peter admired the sergeant's conservatism, and gladly accepted the shelter of a seat on an ammunition case lashed to the masthead. He could now clearly see the forming Dutch fleet, almost within gunshot range acceptable to British captains, and did not like their proximity to shore, although it meant the Dutch would have to fight or die. He idly wondered if the enemy crews wore their wooden shoes in this weather.

"That's the Camperdown coast, isn't it, sir?" Burke asked.

Recognizing the tactful manner of imparting information, Peter nodded. "Keep your hands inside your jackets," he ordered. "We don't want any numb fingers."

The Dutch, in a straggling double line, suddenly added a sheet of gunpowder smoke to the tattered mist. There wasn't any sun to reflect on the hundreds of cannonballs which flew out of the screen, and Peter was unable to see any of the spheres until he felt the vibrations of their impact into the hull transmitted up the taut mast. He thanked God the Dutch had lowered their fire, though the gratitude was selfish.

Ahead, the *Monarch* hauled up a set of gaudy bunting. Peter was sufficiently conversant with the signalbook to know that Admiral Duncan was ordering his ships to pass through the Dutch line and engage them on the shore side. Why, he didn't know, nor would he ask. He had long since discovered that admirals had their own peculiar reasons for their actions.

"Look to your flints," he ordered, to give the marines something to occupy their attention as the right wing of the British went into combat. The tactics were simple—the tactics of two men hammering bareknuckled at each other until one is vanquished. It was half after noon, and the weather was mysteriously changing for the better when the *Monarch* abruptly opened fire.

Enveloped in smoke, the powerful seventy-four disappeared, only her topgallant masts indicating her proud position between the third and fourth ships at the rear of the Dutch line. She would absorb terrible mauling in the brief minutes that would elapse before

the remainder of the English squadron could bring their guns to bear support. Every man aboard the *Fidelité* sensed the hell to which their mates in the *Monarch* were being subjected. Peter glanced at his marines. Gone was grumbling about the cold. Harsh, weather-worn faces peered at the vapor-shrouded flagship. Tough hands clutched loaded muskets. Battle-lust smouldered in their eyes.

FOR HIMSELF, Peter tried to understand what success or victory in this struggle would mean. In either case, a thousand men would never drink another mug of grog, while a thousand families would discover that black was their customary color of dress expected of them by their sympathetic neighbors. One admiral would receive the thanks of his country—the other, the execration. One fleet would keep the sea—the other would be driven from it—for a time. That was what perturbed Peter. Battles and wars were not truly decisive. In the world's history, new combinations of states periodically arose to attack other new combinations of states. There was no end to it.

"Lieutenant!" Burke shouted.

Peter was roused from his cogitation by the unpleasant sight of a cannonball flinging past the starboard side of the platform and carrying off a hapless marine in its implacable flight. The shot came from a Dutch ship which was somehow less than three hundred yards distant, and Peter had a lump in his stomach the size of that iron mass when he said casually: "Sight your pieces."

Wordlessly, the marines bore a bead on the Dutch vessel, a little but mighty sixty-four, inferior to the *Fidelité* in everything but the stout bravery of her crew. Peter's part in the conflict was simple. He and his marines had to gain control of the tops, which meant that his muskets had to drive the Dutchmen off their fighting platform. It was short, fierce work, victory laureling the officer who could first establish superiority of musketry power.

He nodded to Burke. "Carry on, Sergeant," he said. "Independent fire."

The muskets popped in unison, sending lead pellets through the smoke and fog straight at the fore and main of the enemy. Peter's marines were masters of their weapons, even at that range. A few hits were scored, and a handful of Dutchmen crumpled or toppled off their platforms. Peter had the idle, usual thought of the warrior, who impersonally wonders what kind of individuals have just fallen beneath his guns.

"Load!" he snarled. "Hurry!"

The Dutch seamen and marines fired back before the Englishmen had rammed cartridges down muzzles. Their volley did not take effect. "They're shooting into the wind, sir," Burke remarked, by way of explanation.

"Not for long," Peter grunted. "Hurry!"

Sitting on the ammunition case, he had a grandstand view of the battle as it developed. The mist was lifting, and a white glare settled upon the North Sea. The *Fidelité* was almost within the distance that Captain Neely preferred, while far off to the larboard, the *Venerable* of Admiral Duncan, head of the left column, had not yet come to grips. Unless Peter's arithmetic was faulty, the odds were even, sixteen major ships in each fleet. In general, however, the English vessels outgunned their adversaries, and superior weight of metal, all things being equal, would inexorably have its way. And yet, when Sergeant Burke gleefully commented on that fact, Peter saw fit to inform his subordinate that: "A Dutch admiral has never lowered his flag to the British."

Undaunted by tradition, Burke cheerfully said: "There's always a first time."

One by one, the marines discharged muskets at their counterparts squatting on the tops of the sixty-four. Peter was about to give an order for a volley when the lashing broadsides of the *Fidelité* made his voice as audible as a gull during a hurricane. The recoil of the heavy guns jolted every timber in the two-decker.

Feeling a light tap on his shoulder, Peter turned to hear what Burke had to say, but the sergeant was industriously reloading a musket. Puzzled, Peter looked at his shoulder. A neat hole was

driven into the bright crimson cloth of his uniform just below the gold of his epaulette.

"Sergeant," he said, frowning with an unexpected stab of pain, "a volley into their foretop, if you please."

WHILE waiting for all marines to be ready, random shots cut down four of them. In reply, their massed fire, delivered at less than a hundred yards, completely emptied the Dutchman's foretop.

Burke held out a musket to him. "Care to try, sir?" he asked courteously. Peter was an excellent marksman, and the sergeant very practically wished to employ that talent.

"No!" Peter said, without thanks.

Baffled by the curt refusal, Burke discharged the weapon himself, sending the bullet through the head of an enemy marine.

Peter felt a blow on his right arm, and was aware without looking that he had been wounded a second time. He was alarmed to find that he could not move the fingers of his hand, and decided that the humerus was broken. Unbuttoning his jacket with the numb fingers of his left hand, he tenderly explored the injury to his shoulder, cold fingers prickling the warm skin of his chest. His wounds were bleeding copiously.

Burke, pounding a ramrod down the barrel of his gun, saw what was wrong. "Here, sir," he exclaimed, "let me!"

An expert in the matter of gunshot wounds, Burke slit the sleeve, ripped it open to the shoulder, and quickly applied pressure to check the flow of blood. "You, Parker!" he called to a nearby private. "Inform the major that the lieutenant is wounded!"

"Ye'll do no such thing, Parker!" Peter barked. "Stay where y'are!" He cursed as Burke roughly bound up his wounds. "Easy, you clod! That isn't wax, y' know."

"Sorry, sir," Burke grinned.

"It's cold," Peter growled, to explain an involuntary wince.

"Right, sir," Burke admitted, and stripped off his jacket. "Put this on, Lieutenant."

Peter shook his head. "Back to work, Sergeant. We must take care of that maintop." A corporal shyly gave him a pull from the ever-present flask of rum. It was against regulations to carry spirits on the person, but whenever a stimulant was needed, regulations or no regulations, it was somehow forthcoming. Hugging his crippled arm, Peter leaned back against the thick masthead, and wished he was back home in England.

The duel of the tops cracked to a foregone conclusion, as superior English musketry harried the Dutch down to their decks. Peter tried to direct the fire into the Dutch cannoneers. His injuries and the alcohol and the temperature made him drowsy. A fine future he had, he kept telling himself—filled with wounds and senseless killing, and

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no chance of escaping until peacetime.

Despite the shriek of cannonballs, the hammering of guns, the screams and shouts of men, Lieutenant Peter Dickoe surrendered to the placid quiet of oblivion, and dropped off to sleep.

Peter did not rouse from the coma into which exposure, shock, and loss of blood had betrayed him until the *Fidelité* was well on her way back to Yarmouth, after Admiral Duncan had captured eleven ships as well as Admiral de Winter. Camperdown was to be the bloodiest battle of all the battles to come in that twenty-odd years of struggle between France and England. Peter was only one of the seven-score casualties aboard the *Fidelité*.

CAPTAIN NEELY, coming down to his cabin upon being told that the marine lieutenant could receive visitors, was very sympathetic. "How d'ye feel?"

Unable to approximate the truth or move his right arm, Peter claimed to be feeling well. He was warm at least, and that was most important to him.

Neely was uncomfortable, and welcomed the arrival of Major Marlow. "I'm sorry, Dickoe," he said, and appealingly looked at Marlow.

"So am I," Peter replied truthfully. It wasn't the greatest of pleasures to be wounded. The sole compensation was the necessary three months' leave for recuperation. Three months to get a taste of peace, and then back to war.

"Y' understand?" Neely asked eagerly as Peter sighed.

Peter nodded. Relieved, Neely went topside, leaving the two marines together.

"No," Marlow said gently, "you don't understand, Peter."

"Sir?"

"Your arm," Marlow explained. "I don't know the medical terms, but a lot of things were smashed up. Ye'll only recover partial use of it."

For a long minute, the two stared at each other in the dim light of a muffled lanthorn. "Y' had a fine career ahead," Marlow said finally. He drew a folded piece of paper from a pocket, and methodically tore it into little shreds. "It has been honorably terminated. A great pity." He smiled ironically. "I commiserate with you, my boy," he concluded, and left the cabin.

It was days before Peter Dickoe could comprehend that freedom had been restored to him. And then another problem came to trouble him—how could he take up his life where he had left it, after what he had endured?

DEATH IN THE EVERGLADES

A Fact Story

By
OLIVER
HAZARD
PERRY

One minute the officers were alive, walking and chatting—the next, they were dead.

THERE was peace in Florida, the year of our Lord, 1835. It was the Christmas season, and the red man and the white were not at war. But in the hearts of the Seminole braves there burned a fierce and terrible hatred for the white troops and settlers. Around their council fires, deep in the gloom of the cypress swamps, their orators told of how the wolves would soon be smelling at the bones of dead soldiers, and the buzzards would be eating their flesh. A half-breed named Powell, the son of a Scotch trader, leaned on his silver-mounted rifle, and boasted in his high shrill voice how he would "make the white man red—red with blood." These threats were real.

Among the white men, too, there was warlike activity. Two days before Christmas, a column of United States troops swung past the wolf pits of Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay and headed for the swamplands of the Florida interior. For a while the southern sunlight was flashed back by their bayonets and pipeclayed crossbelts. Then their road ran into the twilight of a trail creeping through the lush forest. At their head rode their commander, Brevet Major Francis Langhorne Dade, a soldier who, like Custer, is remembered more because of the manner of his death than for anything he did during life. In the rear followed the baggage, drawn in an ox-cart, and their artillery—a single cannon, a six-pounder. Their destination was Fort King, a lonely and isolated post 65 miles deep in the wilderness of swamp

and jungle. They were never to reach it. Instead the wolves would smell at their bones, and the buzzards eat their flesh. And there would be red wounds on their naked white bodies.

We know very little about these men, now over a century dead. We know their names, we know they were mourned by their friends, and we know how they died. They were two companies of regular artillery, equipped as infantrymen, and numbering fifty bayonets each. The organizations from which they were drawn were the Second and Third Regiments of Artillery, plus a handful of men from the Fourth Infantry. In all they numbered 110, eight of whom were officers.

The engagement in which these troops were to lose their lives, known to history as the Dade Massacre, is now all but forgotten. For many years, however, it was the most overwhelming disaster in our century of Indian warfare. More men marched behind Dade, than followed Grattam into the Cheyenne Nation, or rode with Fetterman from Fort Phil Kearney. Only once in point of numbers was it surpassed. That happened on a June Sunday, forty years later, when Custer, with five troops of the Seventh Cavalry at his back, rode to his death on the banks of the Little Bighorn.

THE cause of the coming war was a scrap of paper—the Treaty of Payne's Landing. It had been signed by certain members of the Seminole tribes, and its chief provision was that the Seminole Nation should be removed *en masse* to reservations in Arkansas, in order that the white settlers might take over their Florida lands. The chiefs and warriors fiercely repudiated this paper, claiming that the treaty signers had no authority to cede tribal land. Moreover they threatened to resist its enforcement until their last keg of powder was burned.

Our government, on the other hand, was equally determined to enforce the treaty terms, by point of the bayonet, if necessary. A fleet of transports had been victualed and lay ready to carry the tribes to the western reservations. The troops of the Florida garrisons, pitifully few in number, were to stand ready to herd them in. The time set for the mass exile was the beginning of the new year.

Skirmishing, however, had already been started by a Seminole hunting party and a group of white civilians. Every day, settlers who had abandoned their mills and plantations streamed into the coast towns. At the forts the guns were always kept shotted. Sentries on post, during the night watches, looking out over the swamps and listening to the booming of the bull alligators, would see above the cypresses and palmettos, a red glare in the sky which marked where the torch had been brought to the house of a white man. Private Kinsley Dalton, the orderly who rode with the mail from Fort King, was captured by Mosquito Coast savages. His disemboweled corpse was found on the trail by those who wondered about his non-arrival.

Thereafter most communications with this distant and weakly garrisoned post were carried by native runners. These letters were invariably written in French, as the Seminoles were reenforced by hundreds of runaway slaves, fugitives from the Georgia plantations, who knew English and Spanish. It was such a letter from General Clinch at Fort King, which carried the orders which sent Dade and his two companies marching to their deaths.

Before their departure, a chief of the "friendlies" sauntered into Fort Brooke, and asked to see Major Dade. This man, whose name was Black Dirt, had boasted that he would collect the $500 reward, placed by the government on the head of the half-breed, Powell. Black Dirt made a point of watching the movements of the hostile braves, and although he didn't succeed in bringing in Powell's head, he did learn something of the plans of his warriors. Dade's orders were well known to them, the "friendly" said, and, he solemnly warned, should the major attempt his march to Fort King he and his men were doomed.

Powell, the half-breed, was known to most of Dade's soldiers and the other troops of the Tampa garrison. He used to hang around their quarters, always

good-natured, always smiling. He acted the clown for them, ran errands, and was the butt of their jokes. Sometimes they would lend him equipment and let him practice with them at drill. And when he caught on to the maneuvers, or learned quickly a new movement in the manual of arms, they would slap him on the back and buy him a drink for being so clever. None had guessed then how really clever the man was, or what hatred for the white man was hidden by his good-natured grins—a hatred born when his wife, the daughter of a fugitive slave, was taken and sold into slavery. Now, in swamp and hummock, Seminoles and Negroes were drilling with rifles and learning the lessons Powell had so painstakingly filched from the Fort Brooke garrison.

The half-breed was a short, slight man, lighter in complexion than his fellows, and slightly hump-backed. He dressed Seminole fashion, with a turban about his head, and always carried his silver-mounted rifle, a gift from General Wiley Thompson, the Indian agent, whose friendship he had contrived to win.

But Powell soon stepped out of his character as white man's friend and buffoon. He took his Indian name of Hassé Ola, or Osceola, as he better came to be known by the whites. He was most violent of the Seminole warriors in the general outcry against the treaty. When Thompson told the assembled chiefs that the government was determined to enforce it, Osceola had walked up to the table where the treaty paper lay and had driven his hunting knife through it. Because of the resentment and spirit of resistance he was arousing among the tribes, Osceola was at length arrested, double-ironed, and imprisoned at Fort King.

AT that time, Osceola's tribal superior was a chief named Charley Emathla, one of the treaty signers, and well-disposed toward the whites. This man came to the Indian agent and wangled his friend's release, pledging that Osceola should cause no further disturbance. General Thompson, eager to keep friendship with the Indians where he could, was glad to do this favor. The irons were struck off and Osceola was set free. Not long afterward, Charley Emathla was murdered. His money—the alleged gift of the whites—was hurled in the swamp, and his mantle of leadership was preempted by his murderer. Osceola was now leader of the tribes.

It may have been with some misgivings, therefore, that Dade's artillerymen began their march through Osceola's realm, the Florida wilderness. It was a wildly beautiful country through which they had to pass, but a terrible one. Huge cypresses, with death-gray festoons of Spanish moss hanging from their boughs, live oaks, palmettos, pines, and thorny vines, grew in wild and tangled profusion. On the higher ground, where the timber was less dense, the magnolia grew, and its cloying fragrance hung heavy over the hummocks. The song of the mockingbird filled the forest with glorious melody by day, and the call of the whip-poor-will at dusk. But the night was made hideous by the scream of the panther, the howl of wolves, and the bull-bellowing of alligators. The trails, under their canopies of cypress branches and Spanish moss, were in a state of midday twilight, and swarmed with rattlesnakes and moccasins.

Such a terrain was ideal for the ambush of a troop column by guerillas. Some of the soldiers may have recalled, though with no great pleasure, that it was in country such as this that a Georgia militia company had been wiped out by Seminole braves, twenty years before, on the Apalachicola.

At the very start of the march, the artillery piece broke down. After fussing futilely around it for a while, the gun crew abandoned it, and hurried to catch up with the column. The camping place that night was on the Little Hillsborough, close by where Dalton had been captured and killed. The troops bivouacked, sentries were posted, and a palisade was erected about the encampment. While the fatigue details were starting this work, Dade sent a messenger back to Fort Brooke with the request that the gun be sent forward.

Three horses and the necessary harness were bought in Tampa, and the six-

pounder jounced off to rejoin the column that night. This was the last seen of them by living white men, although a day later an unfortunate despatch rider did set out to overtake them. He was to share the fate of the men he rode to join.

The first intimation that all was not well with the marching soldiers occurred on the twenty-ninth. On that day, a dog belonging to Captain Gardiner crawled home to Fort Brooke, with clotted blood marking a wound in his neck. The men of the garrison stared at the tired animal, then at each other, and asked a question none could answer.

"What's happened to Dade?"

The answer was soon forthcoming, however. That same day a badly wounded soldier, Private John Thomas, struggled in, and brought the story the dog had been unable to tell. Two days later, on the thirty-first, two of his comrades, Privates Rawson Clark and Sprague, returned to confirm Thomas's story. These men also had been wounded, and they were all that were left of 111.

THE early part of their uncompleted march to Fort King had not been eventful. The troops had been provisioned for ten days and made the journey in easy stages. The night halts were made early, in order that, before twilight, they could clear a campsite and circle it with a palisade. During the hours of darkness their sleep was broken by unseen marksmen who fired from a distance into the camp. No one was hit, but it seems that the purpose of the firing was to rob the men of their rest and to fray their nerves, rather than to inflict casualties.

Christmas Eve and Christmas came and went. Surely some one of them must have wished someone else a Merry Christmas, and surely more than one man's thoughts must have journeyed far from the Floridas—but there is no record of these days having dragged by a whit different from any other day of soldiering. On the night of Christmas Eve the despatch rider, a volunteer named Jewell, rode into camp. But whether he found the soldiers somber or merry we cannot know.

On the night of the twenty-seventh, camp was made near a pond called the Clayhole, on the edge of Wahoo Swamp. Before dawn, the next morning, they were turned out to resume the march. They pulled their rations from their knapsacks, and munched them in the early darkness. Then before the morning twilight had begun, they filed off into the black forest. This was the last leg of their journey and they hoped to reach Fort King by nightfall.

That day at Fort King, the forty-six soldiers of the garrison were on fatigue duty. Digging a ditch they were, and wishing no doubt they were back behind the plow. The weather was pleasant. General Thompson, the Indian agent, and Lieutenant Constantine Smith, smoking a stogie, went strolling outside the fort in the early afternoon.

Wiley Thompson was an especial object of Indian hatred. He it was who had notified the chiefs that the government was determined to enforce the treaty terms. And he, they decided, should be the first white man killed in the war of resistance. Since the day before, a party of braves under Osceola lay hidden in the dense foliage near the fort, waiting the opportunity to take this officer's scalp.

One minute the two officers were alive, walking, and pleasantly chatting. The next, they were prone, dead, and their bloody hair was being waved about in wild triumph. They had been surprised and rushed by about sixty warriors before they had opportunity either to run or defend themselves. The war party then called at the sutler's store long enough to murder sutler Rogers, and his three clerks, and to set the place on fire.

The startled sentries at the fort frantically touched off the cannon, while the fatigue party threw down their picks and shovels and raced for their rifles. The shots whirred harmlessly by the savages, who having done with the agent and his friend, were surrounding the store inside which the sutler's crew were desperately trying to barricade themselves. The ditch-diggers stood to arms within the fort, and listened, chalky-faced, to the yells which came

from the sutler's store. They watched the flames, and guessed that their turn would come next. They wondered how long they could hold out, and thanked God that two companies from Fort Brooke were on the way to reenforce them. But at that moment, few, pitifully few, of the soldiers of these companies were alive, and these had but minutes to live.

THE line of march for Dade's troops that morning lay along the margin of the pond. On one side of their route lay a forest, dense with pine trees and palmettos. On the other lay the water. At about nine o'clock, the advance guard had passed the head of the pond, when the silence was broken by the report of a rifle. It was immediately answered by a shot from a soldier's musket, aimed at random into the undergrowth.

Without waiting for orders, the marching men halted, and looked to their leader. Dade was bringing his horse around, when the woods were split with a terrible volley. The major crashed from his saddle riddled with bullets. With him fell half his soldiers, including two officers and practically all the men of the advance guard.

According to an Indian version of the battle, Dade was the first man killed. The shot which dropped him was fired by Chief Micanopy, a friend of the major's. Micanopy squeezed the trigger with the greatest reluctance, and only after he had been threatened with death by his warriors. Then he threw down his

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gun and refused to have any further part in the fight.

The troops were taken completely by surprise by the suddenness of the attack. Some of the men were so excited they fired their pieces in the air. The rest whooped and shouted and fired point-blank at the jungle. The officers ran up and down the line, waving their swords, shouting unheard commands, and cursing both their men and the enemy. The column received half a dozen volleys before they were able to see a single foe. Then like a swarm they rose out of the pines and palmettos, about eight hundred Indians and Negroes, of whom a hundred were mounted.

By this time, however, the surviving soldiers had recovered from the surprise and were ready to receive the attack. They met the charge with deadly fire, shooting at will, and picking their marks.

The field gun was brought forward from the rear and put in position. Several rounds were fired, and the swamp air was dense with their reeking smoke, which completely curtained the gunners. As soon as this drifted away, however, the cannoneers were brought down by Seminole sharpshooters. Fresh gunners, who sprang forward to replace their dead comrades, met with the same fate.

After about an hour's hard fighting the Seminoles drew off and assembled on a hill about a mile and a half from the scene of action. The soldiers at once began to prepare for their return. Only about thirty of them were alive, most of whom were wounded. Captain Gardiner of the Second Artillery, the senior surviving officer, took over command. Half the men were put to work collecting timber and constructing a blockade. The balance were set to caring for the seriously wounded, and collecting the belts, cartridge boxes, and arms of the dead.

The breastwork was only knee-high, when the second Indian attack began. The warriors advanced coolly and deliberately on the troops, taking cover behind tree trunks each time the cannon was fired. The men inside the breastwork found it gave them very little protection. They lay down as they loaded their heated pieces, and took advantage of what little cover their miserable fortress gave them. But they were so few, their powder was giving out, and almost all were wounded. Lieutenant Keais sat propped against logs, with both arms broken, watching helplessly. Lieutenant Henderson, with one arm disabled by a musket ball, loaded and fired his gun forty times with his left hand before he dropped dead. One by one his companions fell beside him—either dead or so badly wounded they could no longer defend their stockade.

The last man able to handle a rifle was Private Clark. He had been wounded in four places, when a fifth shot, tearing through his shoulder, dropped him helpless to the ground. It was only then—after the last defender had been put out of the fight—that the warriors were able to take the breastwork.

THE Seminoles, when they broke in the stockade, neither mutilated the dead nor abused the wounded. They contented themselves with stripping the soldiers of their belts, then withdrew. A party of about a hundred mounted Negroes then rode up, and started to work, scalping the corpses, and tomahawking the dying. Some of the bodies they robbed or stripped. There was no torture of wounded men, however. Those still living were killed, brutally enough, but quickly.

Clark's life was spared, but not through mercy. A Negro was about to tomahawk him, when a fellow black grabbed the man's hand, saying that the soldier could not recover from such wounds, and they should leave him to die as painfully as possible. Clark, nevertheless, did recover sufficiently to make his way back to Fort Brooke. He, and the other two survivors, had been afraid to try to reach Fort King because the war party had retreated in that direction.

Another survivor, Private Thomas, owed his escape to the fact that the warrior who was strangling him happened to be a chance acquaintance. He had helved the brave's hatchet a few days before the ill-fated march, and the warrior permitted him to buy his life for six dollars.

It was at about two or three o'clock

that the last soldier was killed. The fight had lasted five hours. Fort King, in spite of the fears of its garrison, was not then besieged, which was fortunate for its troops, as it probably would have been taken.

Six weeks later, a more fortunate column of troops under General Gaines passed that way and white men viewed for the first time the field of the dead. First they came upon a litter of belts and boxes scattered on the ground. Then they found the ox-cart, with the corpse of a soldier sprawled on its floor. Nearby lay a pair of dead horses, and the skeleton of a soldier's dog.

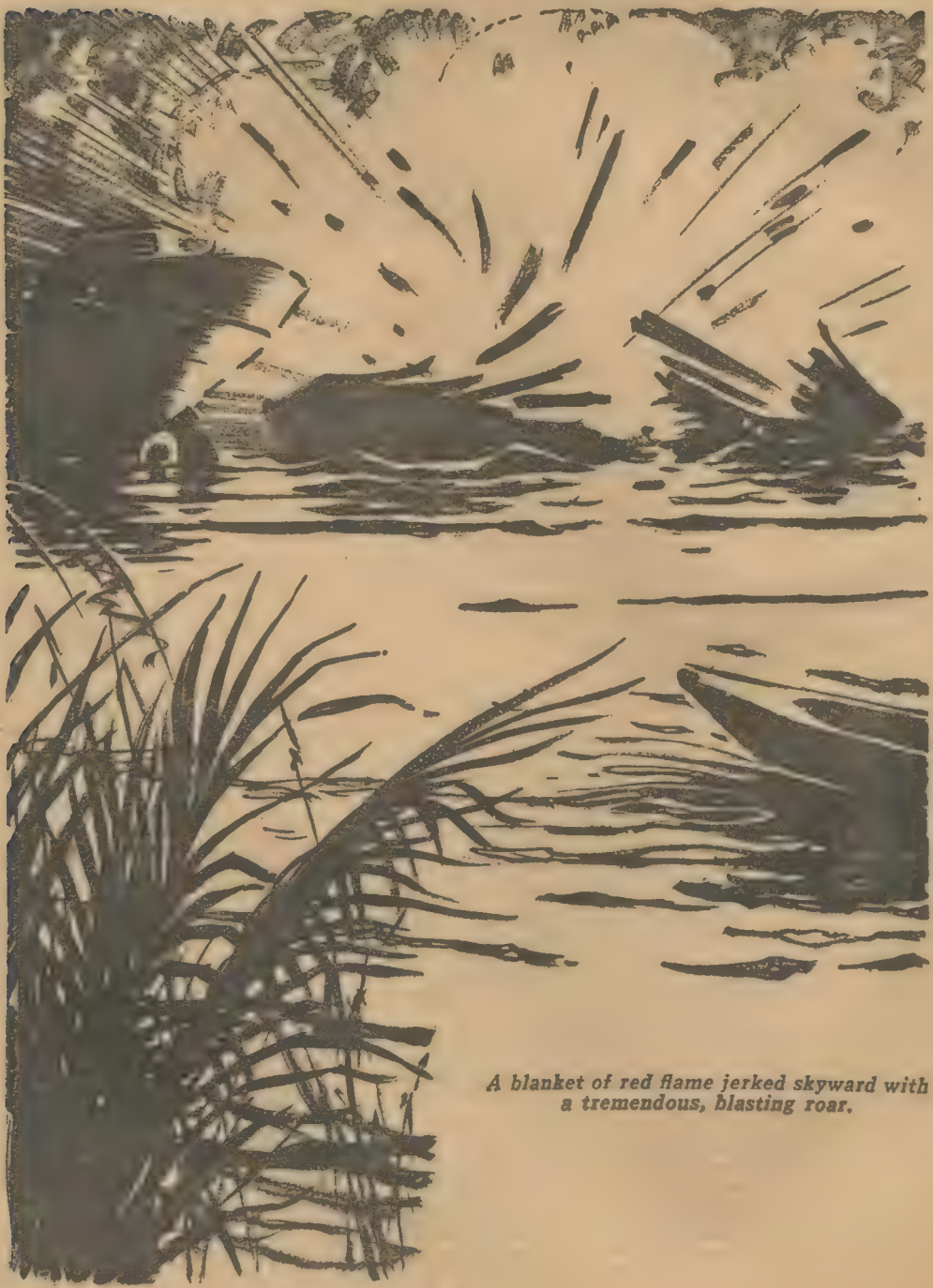
Farther down the road, the ground was covered with corpses. Inside the timber breastwork, the thirty dead men lay at regular intervals, each one's forehead resting on the logs over which he had fired. Very few of the bodies had been moved by the mopping-up party. The dead had been scalped in the position in which they had fallen, and, apparently, had not been touched since. The two oxen, still yoked together, lay inside the enclosure as though asleep. On the outside, the ground was strewn with men who had been killed in the first stage of the fight.

Very few of the bodies had been robbed. The burial party took from the dead many rings, bar-pins, watches, and other jewelry, as well as several hundred dollars. The bodies were collected and buried in two common graves. All the officers were identified and all the men were accounted for. The cannon was raised from the swamp, where the Seminoles had sunk it, and this was set up to mark the Field of the Dead.

This war ended in ultimate victory for our arms, but it is not a phase of our history in which the nation can take too great a pride. A remnant of the Seminole Nation remains in Florida, but the bulk of them went into the exile they dreaded. Osceola, having worsted our troops on many a field, was taken by treachery. At the orders of General Jesup, he was arrested under a flag, while coming to parley. He died, not long after, a prisoner at Fort Moultrie.

In one point only can we take pride—that is in the stubborn valor of the American troops. The war they fought was none of their making. Often they lost, as did Dade's artillerymen. But the sins of politicians and treaty makers did not rest upon their heads. And their steady courage, though knowing nothing on earth could save them, should make this overwhelming defeat a source of pride to the Service and to the Republic. Taps.

THE ENLISTMENT OF JOE LIGHTNING



A blanket of red flame jerked skyward with a tremendous, blasting roar.

A NOVELETTE

By

LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH

MAJOR SAM LAIFORT twisted his boots under the office chair until his spurs caught a firm grip on the scarred legs. He studied Joe Lightning across the room, who in turn studied their latest find in Sakdal *paltiks*. Sergeant Lightning bent over the crudely made gun, but the bending was from his waist only, his military ramrod of a spinal column refusing to give the fraction of an inch.

"Now look here, Joe," Major Sam spoke of something that was weighing on the minds of both, "there's no need of you gettin' drunk this time. The transport's in. You'll take her to the States, enlist up in grade, and I'll see that you get back here on the next ship."

Joe Lightning's bronzed, handsome face remained impassive, though the major understood how distasteful to him was the duty ahead. His fourth hitch would be completed today and no self-respecting man could re-enlist in the Philippines unless he was drunk or insane. It would be unethical, according to the old army standards and according to good common sense.

"You know what hard liquor does to you, Joe," Major Sam persisted. "Maybe it's the Cherokee blood, huh? Anyway, this time you go back to the States."

Joe Lightning sighed, very faintly, and got up from the desk that he had been using for a workbench. Immediately everything in the room seemed to shrink a little in size. Joe Lightning was tall, but he carried so much bone and muscle that his height wasn't noticeable except in relation to other things.

"That's what I had in mind, sir. Up until this mornin'." He moved over to Laifort's desk, the wide-muzzled murderous-looking homemade rifle in his hands. "You just take a look at this *paltik* I found last night under a fish-seiner's shack."

Sam took it, gingerly. "Loaded?" he inquired.

"Yeah. Sure. But not primed. That's seamless tubing they used for the barrel, no wire wrapped around the muzzle end to keep it from bustin', like as usual. An' that's a pretty fancy hammer, I'd say."

"Uh-huh. I can see that, now you mention it." Sam raised his eyes.

"Well, I gotta find their cache. An' I can't find it if I'm on the *Chaumont* goin' back to the States to re'-up, now can I? An' what about that camera shop?"

Sam handed the gun back, with a deep sigh of resignation. "I s'pose not. So you just's well get at it."

Joe nodded dourly. "First, though, I'm goin' to try a shot with this, just to see if she's as good as she looks." He tramped back to the desk, where he had a can of primers.

They heard the swift clump of boots outside. The major's clerk poked his head in the door. "Colonel Wright, sir," he announced.

THE COMMANDING officer strode in, his military figure contrasting with Laifort's. Sam was short and round and jolly, and like so many good-humored people Sam was untidy in appearance.

He made a pretense of getting to his feet but Colonel Wright gestured an "as you were" that included Joe Lightning, who had really snapped up to attention.

"Read that," the C. O. growled, tossing a thick military communication onto the major's desk. "By codfish, this army's headed for hell on roller-skates when they can do things like that."

Sam hated military communications. "Seems like you've already read it, John," he said mildly. "What's in it?"

"What's in it! Listen, they're going to conscript men in the States. You know that, don't you?" He didn't wait for an answer. "So what does this lug do but break out in a rash of patriotism all of a sudden, before he can be called to service like any other American boy. Accepts a captaincy in Uncle Sam's army. *Accepts* a captaincy!" the C. O. repeated, his voice thick. "Something you and I had to work for like dogs."

"Politics?" Laifort inquired, all the good humor leaving his face.

"Sure. Papa's a senator or governor, or maybe he's just got a well-oiled political machine. Anyway, his fair-haired kid is on our hands."

The major unlocked his spurs from the chair rungs. "On our hands!"

John Wright quieted down a bit. He took his campaign hat off to fan himself. As a brother-in-arms, who'd been over the bumps with him, he had an affection for the rolypoly major. Also he had a deep and abiding faith in his peculiar abilities. This catastrophe might not be so cosmic, after all.

"On our hands!" Major Sam repeated.

A cherubic smile replaced the scowl on John Wright's face. "To be specific," he said, " on *your* hands. He's been assigned to G2 work."

Sam groaned. "Why, oh why, do they always think that G2 is a spot for misfits!"

Wright found that he was beginning to enjoy this thing, after all. "Well now,

Sam," he said in a reasoning voice, "you know they can put a uniform and captain's bars and a Sam Browne belt on a window dummy, but that doesn't make him know 'squads east' from 'present arms,' or how to command a guard mount or tell men how to conduct indirect machine gun fire or—"

"When?" Sam stopped the other's pleasure. "When does this happen to me?"

"I understand," Colonel Wright said, "that he came on the *Chaumont*. At least his name was on the passenger list and he's been seen and *heard* once or twice around the Army-Navy Club. He's not—er—what you might call modest. And, as I understand it, he's getting the situation well in hand before reporting for duty."

Real concern showed in the major's face. "Now look here, John, we can't have some monkey pokin' around the natives at a time like this. Better send a patrol out to pick him up and give him a few hints on military etiquette."

Joe Lightning had been standing at attention, waiting to speak.

"What is it, Sergeant?" Major Laifort growled.

"With the Major's permission, I'll test out this *paltik* and then—ah—"

"Did you hear what Colonel Wright just told me, Sergeant?"

IT WAS an odd question, since the two officers had spoken in voices well pitched with emotion, and since they knew that Joe Lightning had the ears of a well-trained Irish mastiff. From Sam's tone it would seem that he held Joe Lightning personally responsible for this politically-made officer that was being foisted onto them.

"I may need you bad," the major said. "You should understand that. And your enlistment's run out. And you can't reenlist with your head blowed off, now can you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then, put that damned blunderbuss down. You know very well how that last one blowed up on you." He squinted just a little harder at the bronzed, heavy-faced sergeant. "S-a-y, you're not tryin' to sidestep your duties, are you?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, then. Go out and start gettin' drunk. But not too drunk, mind you. Hard liquor raises hell with you Cherokees. And, Sergeant, remember that last time you had to get drunk to re-enlist. No more chariot races with our Q. M. mules at some ghastly hour in the morning. You hear me?"

"Yes, sir," Sergeant Joe Lightning said in a hurt voice. He about-faced smartly. At the door he almost collided with an odd-looking figure in officer's garb. Or rather, the figure collided with him since, in making a military entrance, it had gotten its Sam Browne belt caught in the door knob and stumbled backward when unexpectedly released.

The figure was below medium height, the uniform of excellent quality and as well fitted as possible, under the circumstances.

"Not so fast, Corporal. Didn't you see me there at the door?"

Sergeant Lightning noted the double captain bars and accorded *them* due respect. "Very sorry, sir," he said, neatly sidestepping the other's chest.

That chest was thrust forward, held so by main force and determination, looking like the bow of a garbage scow. The stern of the figure, thrust back with the same grim determination, gave a general impression of the poop castle on an ancient sailing ship.

Sam Laifort groaned. "It's him," he whispered. "John, is that posture the latest thing in 'position of a soldier?' "

The figure turned around from Joe Lightning and fastened eyes on Colonel John Wright. "Major Laifort, I presume," he said. "I am Captain Harold Montgomery, reporting for duty."

Sam made wild gestures, patting his own shoulder straps that were decorated with gold maple leaf of his major's rank. "The buzzards!" he warned, in a hoarse whisper, meaning the colonel's insignia.

"Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon. You're not—"

"I'm Colonel John Wright," the C. O. stated in a thick voice.

"Oh, yes," Captain Montgomery said, fixing his eyes on the silver eagles, as

though to memorize them. "Since accepting my commission I have been too busy studying the situation over here to bother with—"

"With such trifles as rank insignia," Major Sam broke in, giving his C. O. a malicious smile.

The captain returned this brightly. "Yes," he agreed. "I had them buy every book that gave authentic information of the Philippines. And I read all of them, coming over on the transport."

"That's splendid," said Major Laifort, who was rather scant on book knowledge of the Islands. "Sit down, Captain. And what do you think of the situation?"

The captain composed himself on a chair. "The Philippine Islands, an archipelago, named after Philip II of Spain," he began, "is composed of approximately 7,083 islands, belonging to—"

"Yes, yes," Major Laifort agreed, hurriedly. "But what I was trying to get at, Captain, was—"

"Was, what in thunder you're supposed to do over here," John Wright finished for him. "We haven't got a G2—an Intelligence Service. And if we have, it's right there looking at you——namely, one Major Sam Laifort, plus that sergeant who just left. The one you called corporal."

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY looked with distasteful patronage at the untidiness of Major Sam. His lips were a straight line and it was obvious that he was making a mental note to report this state of affairs back to Washington, D. C.

"I simply can't understand it," he said. "That man looked like a native, sir. And if I'm any judge of appearances, a very stupid order of native. During the five days since I arrived I have been quietly mixing with the Filipinos, in their native haunts, studying them, talking with them. I'm sure that I will be able to select one much better fitted for our work than that sergeant."

The major and colonel exchanged startled glances. They'd been playing with dynamite here and didn't know it.

"Captain," Major Laifort spoke with great seriousness, "I want you to listen to me for a few minutes. Listen carefully."

"Why of course, your hon—I mean, sir."

"As you may know," Laifort began, "the Philippines are to have their independence in 1945. The common natives didn't care much about that one way or the other, so long as they had a full stomach. But the politicians wanted the soft berths that they could get in a commonwealth government, and Uncle Sam said O. K. Everything was fine, except for some malcontents known as *Sakdalistas*, who are very tough hombres indeed. They love to cut throats and generally blow things up.

"All right, they can be handled by the commonwealth, especially since Uncle Sam has the Thirty-first Infantry over here to handle 'em. But a couple or three years ago things changed. A certain Oriental power started outgrowin' their breeches, wanting everything in the Pacific, including the salmon runs off the coast of Alaska."

Captain Montgomery put on his bright smile again. "That would be—"

"We'll name no names. But lately the politicians have started to think that maybe they don't want their independence after all. Because as soon as they get it this Oriental power would take it away, along with the soft berth. But meanwhile the *Sakdalistas* have been taken over to a large extent by this power, and are being quietly armed."

"That's impossible," Captain Montgomery informed the major. "It's against the law to import or sell arms or ammunition for the Filipinos. I read that in—"

"They don't import 'em," the major told him. "They make them. They're called *paltiks*, which consist principally of a hunk of gas pipe wrapped with wire to keep it from bursting. They've been making them for years and years. But lately, very lately, the design has shown a mysterious improvement, as though some outsiders were beginning to supervise things."

He motioned toward the crude gun that Sergeant Lightning had been preparing to test. "We've got reliable information," he said, "that they have

already collected a whole mess of those things with the idea of taking control here, or at least making it just that much harder for us to defend the Islands in case of an emergency."

Captain Montgomery had gone over to examine the *paltik*. "How very interesting," he exclaimed, and picked up one of the primer caps. "Like an old Civil War cap-and-ball musket."

"You'll notice," Major Laifort said, "that the hammer was stamped out and not—hey, watch out!"

Captain Montgomery, in his zeal as an investigator, a G2 man, had primed the nipple, cocked the hammer and pulled the trigger.

Fortunately he missed Sam by a good six inches. And the wall behind the major was part of the main structure of the walled *Cuartel de España*.

When the haze of black powder smoke had thinned a trifle they saw the new captain sitting on his stern counter where he had been placed by the gun's recoil. The bewildered look on his face changed rapidly to one of wrathful, wounded dignity.

"It was that stupid native sergeant," he accused. "I just know it was! He should be dismissed from our army."

CHAPTER II

THE DANCE OF KNIVES

THE "stupid native sergeant" sat on one of the *bejuco* chairs at a table in one corner of the Nipa Bar, solemnly eyeing a peck flask of native gin and planning the afternoon.

He knew that Major Sam would see that his re-enlistment papers were in order over at regimental HQ, awaiting his signature. He would drink just enough of the gin to carry its perfume on his breath, so that he could have witnesses to the fact that he was drunk when he re'd-up. Otherwise, everybody would say he was crazy to sign for another hitch in this stinkhole. But of course they didn't know about Major Sam, nor about Joe's special assignment.

Joe swallowed two bar glasses of the gin in rapid succession, felt it removing parts of his throat and stomach-lining before striking bottom.

There was the clink of high heels, the rasp of a chair beside him. He looked up into the magnificence of Anita Lichauco's eyes. They were large, those eyes, and luxuriously fringed with dark silken lashes. They were of a soft depth of brown that is indescribable. They were the sort of eyes that movie queens dream of with envy, the kind that make "sundowners," men who keep missing boat after boat back to the States.

"Please do dance with me, Joe," she begged in the soft, liquid tones of the *Tagalog* language.

He barely smiled at her, though she was accustomed to having men stutter and go quite insane before her loveliness. Perhaps that was why she found him so terribly fascinating.

They danced to the phonograph and he didn't speak a word during the whole dance. As a matter-of-fact, Joe Lightning was busy assimilating his gin and thinking that, after all, it wasn't going to be so tough getting drunk for his re-enlistment.

When they were finished, walking back to the table, she said in English: "You dance, Joe, I cannot tell you for why it gives me such pl'asure."

"As good as Slim Aven?" he inquired, just to check up on his own dancing.

She moved her shoulders, aware that the lacy mesh of her native Filipino gown gave a pretty good idea of how delightfully she was formed below the ivory shoulders. "That one," she said contemptuously, "he is like the piece of hemp."

Joe took another swig of gin. His eyes were caught momentarily by the two Philippine *bolos* that were crossed on the wall with the serpentine blade of a Moro *kris* arranged decoratively below them. Some vague emotion stirred in his mind, but disappeared before he could grasp it for inspection. Joe Lightning often had those queer memories, as though from another life that he had lived.

"Why do you drink that *djin*?" she pouted. She changed to Tagalog as the most convenient language, since Joe Lightning spoke it like a native. In fact,

Joe was the only soldier and perhaps the only white man in the Islands, or rather, the only American, who could speak it perfectly.

"You come here many pleasant afternoons, and talk with me and drink beer," she continued. "But this *djin,* I think you must not drink this. It makes you crazy."

Joe didn't think so. In fact it annoyed him to have her say that. Everybody always said that Indians couldn't drink hard liquor. Of course she didn't know he was an Indian. Maybe she thought him a native. Anyway, she was a good kid, in her way. One who liked to talk. And there were a lot of interesting things to be heard and seen around the Nipa Bar.

He took another double slug of gin. "Let's dance again," he suggested, and got up.

As they danced around in the dimly lighted café, Joe's eyes kept following the glimmer of steel made by the crossed *bolos* and the *kris.* Once, in connection with them, the name of Saito Kisaburo popped into his mind. Saito Kisaburo was a quaint little slant-eyed merchant who had a dusty, ill-kept shop in the Japanese district of San Nicolas Binondo, where he sold cameras and photographic supplies.

TIME passed, measured like an hour-glass by the lowered level of gin in the peck bottle. Papa Lichauco, who owned the Nipa Bar, called the lovely Anita to attend her regular duties. This gave Joe Lightning an opportunity to plan his re-enlistment in greater detail. He was determined this time to make his particular deity, Major Sam Laifort, proud of the way he handled this difficult assignment of re-enlisting.

The street lights were on now. The evening crowd was collecting and the phonograph had been replaced by a five-piece orchestra which boasted of having two Moro drum players from the jungles of Mindanao.

Joe doubted this very much, knowing something of the tough little Moros from the south. But one of them did have a broad knife-wound across his cheek, which might have been made by a *kris.*

Joe admired that knife-wound. He signaled a barefooted waiter and commanded that the one with the scar be supplied with drink—any kind and as much as he wanted. After one of the dance intermissions the drummer hoisted an imaginary glass to Joe's health so that Joe knew his orders had been obeyed.

As the gin sank in his bottle Joe became aware of an increased note of savagery in the orchestra music. It didn't occur to him that the gin might be partly responsible for this. More often, and for longer spells, his eyes were fastened on the crossed *bolos* that decorated the wall of the Nipa Bar.

The gin bottle was empty, reminding him that there was something he must do. Those *bolos* made him think of Saito Kisaburo, who seemed in his confused mind to be someplace not far away, leading a horde of natives, armed with *bolos* and *paltiks.* But he mustn't think of that now. Somehow he was certain that Major Laifort wouldn't want him to think of it at this time and place.

Just now the orchestra was playing a native piece that throbbed with drums. Joe Lightning wanted to dance to those drums.

It wasn't clear just how it happened but suddenly he *was* dancing. He was alone out in the middle of the floor. There were faces watching him, making a dark, intent border around. The natives' hands moved like cymbals to catch a mysterious half-beat between the drums—natives whose eyes seemed to echo the dim memory that was urging his own movements.

Once Joe Lightning thought he saw a white man in uniform, who wore captain's insignia. But that was sheer nonsense! No officer in his right mind would intrude here.

Joe was crouched, moving in a circle with mincing, jigging steps of toe-and-heel. At regular intervals his body straightened, queer animal-like sounds escaped his throat, and it seemed as though the trailing feathers of a war bonnet scraped his back.

HE felt the need of something in his hand. The wall crowd parted before his quick lunge. He wrenched one of the *bolos* from its fastening and continued the dance, swinging it in cadence.

The high, blood-tingling notes of a clarinet shivered the air, attesting to the true birthplace of jive.

Joe became aware of another figure, dancing opposite him. It was the ape-faced little Moro with the knife path across his cheek.

He, too, had a *bolo*. They danced forward to meet each other, the heavy blades clashing.

Undiluted joy lifted the souls of Joe Lightning and the other savage. It was "the dance of knives." It was a dim, primeval memory that traced its path upward across the Bering Straits when a land strip connected Asia with North American and thence southward to the bloody Aztecs.

A hoarse voice shouted: "Hey, you Goo-goos! This's got to stop!"

Two burly soldiers, with M. P. brassarts on their arms, shoved through the crowd. One of them whipped out his heavy service Colt.

The Moro made a quick dash toward the *kris*, his favored weapon. The barrel of the automatic came down on his skull with a hollow, clunking sound, a blow that would fell an ox.

Joe Lightning had dropped his *bolo*. He caught the second M. P. with a hammerlock and gave him a quick, hard shove so that he went headfirst into the mid-section of the other military cop. They were both down in a squirming heap. The natives had opened a pathway for Joe's escape.

Joe scooped the dazed Moro up onto his shoulder. It wasn't proper to leave a wounded comrade on the battlefield.

A weight dragged at him as he started to escape. Somebody kept shouting: "You're under arrest!" A high, feminine voice was screeching in *Tagalog*.

Joe turned on the one trying to prevent his escape. Anita was at one side, crying advice to him in native dialect.

Joe didn't strike the man with his fist. He simply gave a quick shove with the heel of his open hand.

The man's hold released as his head snapped back. Joe recognized him. And with a thrill of horror he recognized the captain's bars on his shoulder. For a moment he stood there, looking down at the frightened officer. Then, carrying the squat, thickset Moro, Joe Lightning plunged out into the darkness.

SERGEANT LIGHTNING sat at his desk in the major's office, examining the Sakdal *paltik* that he had intended to test. It had been fired and he had the unpleasant suspicion that he was the one who had fired it.

His head throbbed with pain. When he tried to think, it hurt even more. He kept looking at the gun, hoping that it might awaken some memory of what had happened the night before. All he could recall was that some friend of his, a Moro named Contoto, had been taken from him by the native constabulary to be put in their *carcel*.

Major Laifort came in, returning the snappy "morning salute" that Joe always insisted on giving him.

"Morning, Sergeant." Major Laifort sat down in his office chair, clutched its rungs with his spurs. "Well," he demanded, "did you get those enlistment papers signed up?"

Joe wet his dry lips and stared at Laifort in miserable silence.

"Well, did you or didn't you?"

Joe shook his head. "I don't know, sir."

"You don't— Now look here, Sergeant—"

The clerk knocked, opened the door to show his red, grinning face. "Captain Montgomery wishes to speak to you, sir," he said, in a choked voice.

"Well, tell him to come in," Laifort thundered. "And wipe that silly grin off your face. You hear me! And Wayne —you call up HQ and find out if they got the enlistment—" The words ended. He stared in open-mouthed wonder as Captain Montgomery entered.

The captain frowned. Unconsciously his hand went up to explore the large, dark-purple area about his left eye.

Memory stirred in the mind of Sergeant Lightning. He bent quickly over

the *paltik,* pretending to examine it with feverish interest. Pictures formed and he closed his eyes in mental anguish.

Major Sam tried to speak. His mouth opened and closed, but no words came. In all of his extensive experience he'd never seen a "shiner" quite as large or perfect as the one which decorated the captain's left eye.

"Are you laughing at me?" Captain Montgomery demanded.

Sam's voice returned. "You were practicing saber manual and caught the *tang* in your eye. Don't tell me that one, Captain. It's been used too often."

"This is no joke," Captain Montgomery warned. "Last night I was down in the native quarter—ah, investigating—that is, I happened to observe a sword fight in progress. Naturally I called the military police."

The major nodded. "An' some Goo-goo socked you in the eye."

"No, sir," Montgomery said, voice thick with anger, "it wasn't a native. It was some man in the uniform of the United States Army who struck me. Deliberately struck me!"

LAIFORT'S smile vanished. "An enlisted man?" he asked.

"A sergeant. He had three stripes on his arm, with some other kind of bars underneath them."

"Oh," the major said, thoughtfully. "Well—well, that's rather serious, Captain."

"Serious!" Montgomery returned, his voice squeaking with emotion. "I've preferred charges against him. That is, I've tried to."

"You've tried to! But my Heavens, man, you—"

The captain was almost weeping with anger. "Don't you see! I didn't know who the man was. Some way or other his face seemed very familiar. But soldiers all look alike."

"Yes," Laifort said, "I suppose they do. *To you.*" Of course this was serious. But in a way Sam Laifort was pleased that the captain's memory was so poor.

"Now look here," Captain Montgomery said, taking a chair and moving it close to Laifort's desk. "I'm positive that one of those military police recognized this man. But he claimed that he didn't. So I want you to get the whole regiment lined up just as soon as possible"

Major Laifort moved his chair back away from the captain. From the expression on his face it would seem that he was smelling a very bad odor.

"If you want the regiment lined up, so that you can pick out the man who struck you," he snapped, "you'd better request it of Colonel John Wright, commanding officer."

He stood up. "And, if I'm not badly mistaken, Colonel Wright is going to tell you to go straight to hell. The Thirty-first has a lot of pride, sir. And in case you don't know it, those bars on your shoulders *aren't a joke.* At least not to the men in the army who had to work for them."

Montgomery had gotten to his feet, his round baby face contorted with petulance.

"You were down in the native quarter where an officer has no business being," Major Laifort concluded. "To my way of thinking, you got exactly what was coming to you."

"Look here—look here, Major," Montgomery stuttered, "I volunteered to serve my country. I don't—"

"You got yourself a commission so you could avoid the draft," Laifort said, before he could stop the words.

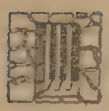
Montgomery's fists were clenched, his eyes wildly roving the room as though in search of some weapon to strike the officer. "Perhaps you don't know it," he threatened, almost shouting, "but my father—"

He stopped, his eyes fastened on the bowed head of Sergeant Joe Lightning. Joe sensed his glance in the heavy silence that followed. He raised his head proudly, his fierce, hawk-like features tight with the knowledge of what he faced.

Montgomery's features gradually cleared of anger. A smile touched his lips and slowly widened with his triumph. He turned on Major Laifort. "I bid you a *very* pleasant good-morning," he said in a voice that mocked the growing apprehension in the other's round face.

CHAPTER III

TROUBLE IN MANILA



MAJOR LAIFORT'S body dropped back slowly into the chair. The bugle notes of fatigue call sounded outside the window. There was silence after that. Sam Laifort sat with his head propped on hand, his forefinger making circles around the small shrapnel scar behind his ear.

His first thought was of protecting his associate. There was no such thing as rank between him and Joe Lightning, except as was necessary for their work.

Here was a man who had really served his country, a man who was a thousand times more valuable to his country than the politically-made captain. He *must* find some way to save him!

"Don't tell me whether you did or didn't strike him," Laifort warned, low-voiced. "Do you think you can beat the rap, Joe?"

"No, sir." Joe shook his head. "The M.P. won't tell. I've known him since his first hitch. But some of those natives will."

"How'd this happen, Sergeant?"

Joe tried to explain.

"This dance of the knives, now. Were you goin' to fight that Moro?"

"Oh no, sir. That's not what you'd call a war dance. A sort of 'pride' dance, I guess you'd call it. Like fighting cocks crowing an' strutting. You know."

Laifort nodded understanding, though he saw that others might not comprehend so readily.

"My grandfather taught me," Joe went on. "When I was no more'n a papoose."

Laifort gave his sergeant a straight look. "You're sure the girl had nothing to do with it. Now if you an' Montgomery were fighting over a native girl—"

"Nothing like that, sir. It was just that Anita wanted me to get away."

"What was that you said she was screeching, when the captain grabbed you?"

"*Sontoken mo ang maliit na baboy matapang na Kaibigan*, sir." The quick, liquid syllables had come from the sergeant's lips without his being conscious of the change in language.

"*Tagalog*," the major said approvingly. "You speak it like a native, Sergeant."

"Yes, sir," Joe nodded. "Remember you told me a long time ago I'd have to. You said that so far as you knew the American army didn't have a single man who could speak it."

"Uh-huh," Laifort agreed, thinking of Montgomery's complacency in having read a few books, to "prepare" himself to take charge of this difficult work. "Just what does that *Tagalog* mean, Joe?"

The sergeant looked embarrassed. "Well, sir—well it means, sir: 'strike the little pig, my brave friend.'"

"So," Laifort commented dryly, "you took the girl's advice. Which means, Sergeant, that you'll probably spend two years or so in the brig at Fort Mills and —damn it, Joe, they can give you a dishonorable discharge for this!"

Blood drained from the sergeant's face, leaving it a muddy brown. "Yes, sir. I know that, sir." Unconsciously his eyes strayed down the clean, freshly starched tropic uniform that he'd put on that morning. They stopped to dwell on the sergeant first-class stripes.

The major was drumming thoughtfully on his desk top. "Joe," he said finally, "you'd better go find that M.P. friend of yours and ask him to arrest you, like he'd just happened to run across you, see. An' don't plead guilty to anything worse than drunk and resistin' arrest. You hear?"

"Yes, sir." Joe stood up. "Say, Major, I'd like to see that little Moro turned loose, if you can fix it. Those constabs might keep him in their lockup the rest of his life."

"Well, why not! If the little ape hadn't—"

"He didn't have nothin' to do with it, sir. He was just havin' a good time for himself an' doin' nobody any harm. As I remember, sir, his name's Contoto."

"You weren't doing any harm, either, if that damn fool Montgomery hadn't butted in." Laifort stood up, extending his hand. "I'll get the little monkey out for you," he promised, as they gripped

hands, "though I don't see how you have time to worry about him with what you're facing."

CONTOTO couldn't understand either, that afternoon, as he was brought in to the American officer. He stood scowling and disdainful, his fierce eyes challenging the other to do his worst.

Laifort saw those eyes shift for a quick, stealthy glance at the Sakdal *paltik* on the desk across the room. A crafty look came into the major's face.

"You've seen one of those before, haven't you, Contoto?"

Contoto's face was expressionless. "What fella he belongs with?"

"Sergeant Joe Lightning who's in a peck of trouble over what happened last night. The sergeant wants to know where those come from and where they're being hidden."

"Who this fella sergeant you talk me?"

"Damn it, he's the man you danced with last night! If it wasn't for him you'd still be in the *carcel*."

"You talk me big native fella, plenty strong?"

"That's the man. That's Sergeant Joe Lightning. And he's the one who had me get you away from the Philippine Constabulary."

Contoto smiled with pride, showing teeth that were black from chewing betel nut. "You fella belong him plenty marster" he stated complacent in the belief that his friend was chief over this man who wore the gold on his shoulder.

After an hour of questioning the major hadn't learned a thing more. Contoto wasn't talking to anybody but the *chief*. And the *chief* was in the guardhouse. At the end the little Moro swaggered from the room, leaving an officer who was almost frothing at the mouth with helpless rage.

Major Laifort made no further progress than this with Anita Lichauco, when his Filipino drove him down to the Nipa Bar next morning.

His arrival at the place caused a terrific amount of excitement. Even the dogs and pigs and chickens that roamed about the place seemed to catch this fever, their uproar abetted and joined in by naked brown children who hazed them for no other purpose than to show off before the officer.

Laifort sent in word that he must speak with the Señorita Anita. Then he sat in his car and waited and waited, trying to appear aloof and unconscious of the many curious eyes. The rains had turned the black, rich earth into a filthy-looking gravy and there was the stench of fermenting vegetable matter and rotten fish.

At length, from this squalid background, came a vision of unutterable loveliness in young girlhood. Anita Lichauco couldn't be more than fifteen years old, the major thought, with a twinge of conscience. And he had come here thinking that in some matter he could shift blame onto her or make use of her!

An instinct rose within him to protect this delicate flower, this innocent child, from a cruel, sordid world. Anita lifted her dark, handsome eyes, their fringed depth caressing him. "You come inside," she suggested practically.

Abruptly the major forgot his first impulse. If anybody needed protection around here it was himself.

"Anita," he began, "you know Sergeant Joe Lightning, don't you?"

She rolled her eyes in thought. "I may know that once," she conceded. "Mabbe not." She gestured hopelessly with brown slender hands. "There are *so* many. You come inside?"

"Yes. I mean, yes, I suppose there are quite a few."

"But not majors," the girl said archly. "You come?"

"Now look here," the major interrupted, putting on a fierce scowl, "you've gotten one of my sergeants into a peck of trouble."

"Maybe I don' know that sergeant," Anita said. She started counting on her fingers. "I know that man which barbers the hair, I know that cook which is for "C" company, the mos' fat man, I know—"

Laifort interrupted, shrewdly. "An' you know Captain Montgomery, too."

The girl's eyes widened for an instant

and she moved back from the car. But the next moment her face had changed to dull stupidity. "So many," she repeated. "You come inside?" There was no hidden invitation in the question this time. It was purely automatic.

The major sighed and wished that Sergeant Joe were here. He'd never realized before how much he had depended on Joe. But it was just a waste of time questioning these natives when they turned on that stupid look.

HE tried to plan something on the way back to the *Cuartel de España*. But it was no use. His plans all ended in the blind alley of needing someone who understood the natives and talked their language. Joe was that man.

Captain Harold Montgomery was in his office when he got back. The mere sight of that round innocent baby face made the hardened campaigner physically ill.

"Well?" Laifort said, taking his favorite chair, raking it savagely with his nubbed regulation spurs. "Well?"

Montgomery seemed to have forgotten their quarrel of the previous day. Perhaps he thought it was a mere trifle, ruining a good man like Joe Lightning.

"Those *Sakdalistas*, Major," he began in an eager voice. "I've already secured some very important information. They've got a big cache of ammunition and a lot of real guns and Lord only knows how many of those *paltiks*." He paused there, awaiting cheers from the major.

Laifort failed him. "Hell, Joe found that out two weeks ago!"

Montgomery's face reddened. But he continued stubbornly. "But I'm going to find out who the leaders are. And I'm going to trail them."

"How're you goin' to find out who the leaders are?"

Montgomery tried to keep from smirking. "Ah," he said roguishly, "that'd be telling." His right eyelid lowered significantly.

Deliberately Laifort turned away from him, looking out the window. "Montgomery," he said, "take my advice and stay away from those natives. If an officer hasn't any more self-respect than to parade the native quarters with a shiner like you've got, then at least he can have some ordinary horse sense."

Instantly Montgomery stood up, dropping his air of good fellowship.

The other's voice continued. "These Sakdals play rough, Montgomery. They use guns and knives, and sometimes the knives get stuck between shoulder blades. So if you haven't any self-respect, at least have a little concern for your status as a white man."

Montgomery sputtered with wrath. "This is twice you've deliberately insulted me, Laifort. Perhaps you'd be a little more careful if you knew who my father is."

Laifort swung, his cold blue eyes drilling the other. His voice was measured. "Montgomery I don't give a tinker's damn who your father is. Now how d'you like them beans?"

Sam Laifort regretted doing that, after Montgomery had left. It wasn't because Montgomery might stir up some Washington-brewed trouble for himself. He'd already lost so many file numbers over such petty things that he bragged of being the oldest major in the U.S. Army.

His worry was for Sergeant Joe Lightning. It seemed incredible that so thoroughly capable a man should be placed in this position by one so incompetent.

Laifort knew that Joe depended on him, if there was anything that could be done. But there didn't seem to be any way of getting at this problem. And just now, because he couldn't hold his temper, he'd thrown away any chance of appealing to Montgomery's better nature—if he had one.

Major Sam spent a miserable day and wakeful night trying to find an opening in this case. If he only had some official excuse for getting Joe Lightning out of hock! But even John Wright, for all his courage, wouldn't dare to turn Joe loose to work on his own defense.

THE answer to Sam's prayer came the next morning, from an unexpected cause. There was an urgent message for him to report immediately to the C.O.

He found Colonel John Wright striding up and down the polished floor that had been worn deep by countless military boots, since those long-gone days when the Spaniards built this *Cuartel* and laid the wide stanch planks of hardwood. The colonel paused each time he reached the end of the room, to glare malevolently through the window at the squalid street below.

"You want to see me, John?" Sam Laifort asked wearily. He, too, stared at the sun-drenched street outside, his eyes bloodshot from worry and the lack of sleep.

Wright wheeled from his pacing. "It's this—it's Montgomery," he said, unable to find a proper epithet. He stopped, apparently trying to get hold of himself. "Sam, did he talk to you about the Sakdals? About going to trail their leaders?"

"So the little squirt went over my head, eh?" Laifort said, grasping for anything that might be used as an official lever against the new man. "Without my permission!"

"Forget that petty stuff and answer my question," Wright commanded.

"Yes, he did, John. But you can't trail these natives. I don't think even Joe could do it. I told that conceited ass to leave them alone."

"Well, he didn't," Wright snapped. He flipped a soiled sheet of paper into Laifort's hand. "Read that," he ordered. "Read it and weep—read it and get some of this headache I've got."

Laifort read the few words that were scrawled on the paper. His first reaction was one of joy. That was before the full significance of the thing struck him.

He put the paper on Wright's desk. He walked quietly over to stand beside the C.O. and gaze out onto the sprawling, dirty-white buildings of Manila, at the rolling foothills of Luzon, beyond the city. Hills that mounted up and up until the lush green of their matted jungle growth met the turquoise of a cloudless sky.

"He could be hidden away any place in those mountains," Wright said. "Or in one of the nipa shacks outside of town." He motioned with his hand. "Or in one of these native buildings in the walled city, that we could throw a rock and hit."

"Yes," Laifort agreed dully. "Yes, of course."

Wright's voice became harsher. "An officer of the United States Army—kidnaped!" The colonel paused, with a gesture of helplessness. "It'd be bad enough at any time, Sam. Right now it's pure poison. We lose plenty face here, Sam. Damnation!"

Sam's mind had bounced like a rubber ball but his C.O. didn't note the change in his expression.

"Imagine throwing a regiment into that brush out there!" Wright muttered. "Looking for a needle in a haystack. Getting the natives stirred up as they haven't been since the days of Forbes."

Sam's finger was making thoughtful circles around the shrapnel scar, back of his ear. "It sure wouldn't do much good, turnin' a regiment out to search for the lug. Would it, John?"

"Of course not, Sam. You know I can't do that. Only what in hell *can* I do? We can't trust the natives, any of them. These sakdals have a lot of sympathy. We can't even trust the Constabulary, now that they're dizzy with this independence and equality idea of Quezon's."

"John," Laifort said in a deceptively mild voice, "you heard about Joe Lightning, didn't you?"

"Uh-huh. That was tough, Sam."

"John, I'd like to have Sergeant Lightning released from the guardhouse and put under arrest in quarters, pending—er—completion of my investigation of his case."

"Didn't know you were investigating it. Who appointed you, you old turkey?"

"And," Sam ignored his superior, "if I know my rules and regulations, a man under arrest in quarters may be assigned to any duty, special or otherwise, which—"

"Yes, yes," tartly, "I've also read the regulations a couple of—" He stopped, his face becoming less grim as he understood what Sam had in mind. "Well—"

"Well, that's all, John," Laifort said, as though everything was arranged. He walked to the door. "You'll have them send him to my office?" he asked. He

left without waiting for the C.O's reply.

CHAPTER IV

A HELL OF AN ASSIGNMENT

SCRUBBED, freshly shaven and clad in his starchiest best Chino khaki, Sergeant Joe Lightning sat in the office of Major Sam Laifort and listened, scowling, while the officer told in detail what had happened while he was in the guardhouse. Joe didn't seem to appreciate the cunning that his superior had used in getting him out of the clink. He didn't seem to appreciate anything this sunny afternoon.

"You work funny," he said, when Laifort had finished. "You told Contoto that I had you get him out of the *carcel.* So that made me head man around here, you number-two man."

Laifort frowned. It was the first time Joe had ever talked to him that way. "Couldn't the fool see that I'm an officer!"

"Sure. And didn't he see me knock an officer end-over-teakettle? An' ain't they got Montgomery right now—maybe tied over an ant hill?"

Sam winced. "You mean that all the officers of the post have lost face because of Montgomery? That's silly!"

"That's the way their minds work. You say that Anita shut up like a clam when you mentioned the captain's name?"

"No. I just said that she seemed to lose interest."

Joe permitted himself a small smile. "I talked with Slim Aven," he said. "While I was cleaning up, over at the barracks. It was the girl who got 'his nibs' hot on the Sakdals' trail."

"How would Corporal Aven know that?"

"He don't. But he told me he was over at the Nipa Bar night before last, some time after my ruckus. Montgomery was still there, sittin' under a banyan tree, holdin' hands."

"With Anita!" Laifort remembered suddenly how coy Montgomery had been the day before when he revealed his knowledge of the gun cache.

"Sure," Joe nodded. "An' these gals over here don't hold hands in the moonlight. That's just what tourists think. The native wrens would consider that purely a waste of time."

Laifort remembered the girl's direct methods, her invitation for him to "come inside." He groaned. "Damn, I've made a mess of this!"

Joe's silence agreed with him.

"Look here, Sergeant," Laifort said, after a pause. "You and I don't seem to be working together like we usually do. What's wrong?"

Joe looked surprised. "Ain't you askin' me to save Montgomery?"

"Of course!"

"Well," Joe said, with invincible logic, "if the Sakdals kill him, there won't be anybody to press those charges against me."

Sam Laifort was shocked. "You'd let them kill an officer!"

Joe grunted. "I heard you and the colonel say how he got to be an officer."

Sam groaned again at the way fate was conspiring to make a monkey of him. And he'd always prided himself on understanding people's minds! A girl's voice mocked him: *Maybe I don't know that sergeant. I know that man which barbers the hair, I know that cook which is for "C" company, the mos' fat man—*

The old crafty good-nature returned to Sam Laifort's face. Maybe he didn't understand the native mind. But he knew white men, white men who stank with the smell of politics. And he knew soldiers.

"Sergeant," he snapped, "I'm afraid you're taking too much for granted. I'm not *asking* you to do this. I'm *commanding* you to do it."

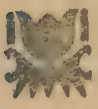
Joe blinked his astonishment. That tone hadn't been used on him for—well, it was years since he'd heard it, in recruit barracks. Unconsciously he stood up, at attention.

The voice continued its impersonal, lashing quality. "Sergeant, you're assigned to the detail of getting in touch with Captain Harold Montgomery and bringing him back to this post, alive and uninjured, if that is humanly possible. Attend to this matter at once!"

"Y-yes, sir." Sergeant Joe Lightning's hand came up in a smart salute.

Major Laifort returned the salute. He sat staring at the door after Joe had left. "And if I fall down on my end of it," he muttered, "by thunder I'll resign from this man's army."

The major meant exactly what he said.



JOE LIGHTNING kicked a *bejuco* chair out of his pathway toward a corner table in the Nipa Bar. He carried a peck gin bottle in his hand. He'd found it back at the baracks, empty, and had partly filled it from the tap, in the shower-room.

He banged the table top with his bottle. Papa Lichauco approached, wiping his hands nervously on the bar towel that hung across his shoulder.

"My very good friend, I greet you," Papa Lichauco said, in *Tagalog*.

"Greetings to you also, Papa," Joe replied in the same dialect but without warmth. "Bring me a beer—a whiskey glass, too."

Papa Lichauco brought the beer and stood nervously massaging his hands while Joe filled the whiskey glass from his bottle of water.

"The last of a peck," Joe remarked, studying the gin flask before returning it to his blouse pocket. He gulped the water from the whiskey glass, grimaced and took a small sip of beer for a chaser.

"I'm gettin' drunk tonight, Papa," he said in English. "An' I may take a notion to kick this joint of yours to pieces."

"But why?" Papa asked, his voice carrying all degrees of surprise and pain.

"Because I damned near got a court-martial for smackin' that captain. Somebody musta' told them who it was did it."

"But the captain, señor—he is—" Papa shut his lips on the exclamation. He left the American and paused for a moment to speak to three Filipinos who sat at one of the wall tables. The biggest one made an instinctive gesture toward the left side of his waist, touching something concealed there under the silk tail of his *camisa*. Papa hurried into the rear of the building, the living quarters.

Joe noted all these things, his face tilted back for another drink. Now if Anita came over, he could be pretty sure that his guess had been right. And it was just possible that the big boy over there would make a try for him before the evening was through. Joe was unarmed, except for his two fists, but that fact wasn't bothering him at all.

Anita wore a thin white-and-red Filipino dress, the red design edged with silver. It's high-ruffled sleeves and the collar and waist were arranged in the conventional folds of the native dress. The whole of it pretended to conceal while, very sensibly, revealing that Anita wasn't a scarecrow by a long shot.

Joe had another shot of his special kind of gin.

"*Potangina!*" Anita's high heel stamped the floor beside him. "Are you not able to see me? *Kumosta, Kaibigan.*"

Joe's eyes met hers with an expressionless stare. "Hello," he said. "Why aren't you out under the banyan, holdin' hands with your captain?"

"You are jealous, eh!" she exclaimed delightedly, taking a chair beside him.

Joe had another drink, in silence.

She moved her chair very close to his, laying a slender hand on his arm. "Where do you think that captain is tonight?" she asked. Her hands raised, moving with graceful touches over the dark gleaming coils of her hair. She was proud of her part in this affair and she was going to brag.

Joe hadn't bargained on the girl talking openly this way. She might not know where he would find the captain. Most likely didn't. But much more talk like this and she'd have her throat cut before morning.

Joe had to change his plans quickly and get out of here before Anita made a fool of herself.

He pushed away from her. "So you won't tell me anything about him?" he said in a loud voice. "Well, I know where he is." He tilted the gin bottle to his lips, thumped it loudly back on the table. "I know where he is," he boasted in a thick voice, "an' I'm goin' tuh find him."

"*Kaibigan!* Please," she begged, in a low whisper. "They will kill you, *Kaibigan!*"

JOE Lightning kicked his chair back, rising. He drained the gin bottle and threw it recklessly through a glassed window. Scowling and unsteady on his feet he lurched out of the café.

The big Filipino in the red flowered *camisa* shirt got up, making a slight but significant gesture toward his throat. He moved to the door with that effeminate walk peculiar to Orientals and south sea natives. But there was nothing effeminate about the expression on his face.

Joe Lightning had paused outside, just beyond the light from the doorway, until he saw the big Sakdal emerge. Satisfied that he would be followed, he struck off diagonally from the road, across fields of *cogon* grass. The dry rasp of their leaves would be easy to trail.

The assassin, knife drawn, followed almost noiselessly skirting around the clumps of grass. This was going to be an easy kill!

But another figure had joined in this deadly game of hide-and-seek. It was short and ape-like in build and its progress after the Sakdal was absolutely noiseless. Contoto had been waiting here with the patience of his breed, sure in his primitive mind that sooner or later "he fellow chief belong plenty big," would return to the Nipa Bar.

Joe paused once, taking a deep breath and holding it while he listened. He continued on a short way farther, beyond earshot of the Pasay road.

He stopped again, waiting, listening.

The grass whispered just a few yards away in the direction that he had come. He removed his campaign hat and with a quick wrist-jerk sailed it a few yards over the grass. There was a clash of leaves where it came to rest. His body crouched, merging into the shadows.

He waited until the Skadal was opposite him, headed toward the sound of his hat. The man's breath was quick with excitement and the lust to kill.

The native gave a quick gasp of surprise as Joe straightened from the shadows. A hand closed like steel on the knife wrist. The sergeant gave a quick twist outward.

There was a cry from the Sakdal. But not entirely of pain. It had a quality that stirred memories in the Cherokee's mind. It was the cry that comes with death!

"He fellow plenty dead, I say so," Contoto observed, stepping wraith-like from behind the Sakdal. He removed his *kris* from the other's neck and stooped to wipe the blood carefully from it.

"Well, of all the damned rotten luck!" Joe Lightning exploded. "You've sure spilled the beans, you little dummy."

Not understanding, Contoto cheerfully agreed in *Tagalog*.

Joe squatted, Indian-fashion, beside the dead native. He'd gone to a lot of trouble to get this man in his power. Joe wasn't above using a few choice tricks to get information. Most anybody will talk if you stick the point of a knife under his fingernails. But not if he's dead.

CONTOTO was explaining things in *Tagalog*. He had been told by the other's servant, the one with gold on his shoulders, that Joe wanted *paltiks*. Well, previously, he had been told that there was a one who had *paltiks*. Many of them. A one in San Nicolas Binondo, and if he were approached properly a one might join to a something that would result in him having a *paltik* and getting to use it.

"Saito Kisaburo?" Joe asked.

Contoto didn't know the name. But when he found that the sergeant marster desired *paltiks* he, Contoto, had gone about, speaking of this to various natives who might know of one.

Mournfully Joe shook his head over his simple-minded friend. "Contoto, I'm afraid you've spoiled everything. I put on a drunk act to get this man off his guard. But I can't repeat on that. Nobody's going to follow me away from the Nipa Bar again. Not tonight. An' the major said I was to attend to this

The native gave a quick gasp as Joe's hand closed like steel on his knife wrist.

detail immediately." Again Joe shook his head, not realizing that in his own particular way he was being just as primitive and trusting as the Moro.

He got up. "Well," he said, "that's that and no use cryin' over—" He stopped his aimless soliloquy, spoke urgently in *Tagalog*, gripping the Moro's thick shoulder. "Who was it that *first* told you about these *paltiks*, long time past?"

"That fellow catch name Thomas Reye," Contoto said promptly.

"Thomas Reye—Thomas Reye—" The name was tantalizingly familiar. Joe saw, mentally, the cockpit out near

Santa Ana cabaret. He snapped his fingers. "I get it! He owns Jesus Rizal."

"Jesus Rizal," Contoto repeated stupidly and watched Joe strip his uniform and put on the clothes from the dead Sakdal.

There was a small pattern of blood on the *camisa* collar. But not much. Contoto was quite expert in selecting the right point for the wavy keenness of his *kris* blade. This blood didn't worry Joe so much as the fear that his broad shoulders might split the thin silk garment.

Completely clad and looking exactly like a double portion of Filipino, Joe turned on the Moro, speaking in *Tagalog* with a slow, stern voice.

"Contoto, no more tonight must you tread in my footsteps. Contoto, if again you tread in my footsteps tonight you get death." Very carefully Joe laid the edge of the Sakdal's knife across the Moro's throat, so that he would be sure to remember. Then he started on a run toward the Pasay road, zigzagging to avoid the clumps of grass and the stunted trees.

CHAPTER V

LOADED WITH DYNAMITE

JOE HAILED a passing *calesa* and gave the driver an address on Taft Avenue. It was a district favored by commonwealth government clearks and tinhorn sports like Thomas Reye.

From this haphazard address he walked to the nearest *alak* shop and asked how he would find the house of Señor Thomas Reye. He did not go immediately to the house but instead wandered with seeming aimlessness until he was certain that no one followed him.

The house of Señor Reye was built of nipa thatch and bamboo. The ground floor was latticed with split bamboo to provide shelter for an old sow with her litter and for the cage which housed Jesus Rizal, the fighting cock, who had won Thomas Reye eight hundred pesos in his first pit main. Thin strips of light shone through cracks in the upper story of the house.

Joe scouted the vicinity to assure himself that no guards had been posted. Then he settled himself comfortably in the tall grass that grew around a clump of banana trees. This position was only a few feet from the ladder entrance to the house.

Joe lay on his back, laced hands making a cradle for his head. Once he thought he saw a dark shadow move on the other side of the road. But he had good eyes and there was no further movement.

The sky was a sable dome whose stars seemed the reflection of the myriad fireflies moving about the ground on their mysterious errands. By turning his head silghtly Joe could see the Southern Cross, that constellation of stars that is so much overrated in tourist literature.

There were clicking hoof-beats on the road. Joe watched the shadow of a *calesa* move by. He didn't change the position of his body and his muscles remained relaxed. He might have to keep this vigil for hours and for night after night. But if Reye had engaged in recruiting Sakdals he was still at it. There had been nothing to frighten him from the work, so it was just a matter of patience until he contacted them.

It was a poor, bungling way to go about the matter but that was Montgomery's fault, not Joe's. He had been detailed to rescue the captain, uninjured if possible, and there was no choice in the matter, no time for the exercise of his usual finesse in handling underworld native affairs.

Joe wasn't thinking of these things at all. He had made his decision on the method. Recriminations were a waste of time. Very likely Saito Kisaburo would slip out of his hands because of this and, warned, would be the harder to catch.

He had used photography as a bait for Kisaburo, since the spy pretended to run a camera shop. That and a pretense of having a loose tongue and an inclination to go into debt. Saito Kisaburo had been delighted to sell him a Japanese-manufactured candid camera on time. And he had been pleased to tell this supposed recruit, who by coincidence was a staff orderly, where he

might get the most interesting pictures.

There was Cavite, a beautiful spot. Yes, that was the Navy depot. And Corregidor, the fortified island at the mouth of the bay. In his work he might be able to go out there. And of course he would want snaps of the Nichols army flying field. So many interesting things that a staff orderly might take pictures of, though he should be careful that no one saw him taking them. The military were peculiar about such things.

And Mr. Kisaburo would develop the film for him very cheaply. And later, when the supposed recruit got into financial difficulties, the little man was glad to extend indefinitely the time payments on the camera, and give him film on credit. Yes, and even loan him a little pocket money.

Joe had been getting along fine there, getting deeper and deeper in debt and therefore nearer to the time when the little man would make him a proposition. Joe never quite got the sort of pictures Kisaburo admired the most. But he came tantalizingly near. The photo section at Nichols had fixed up a good bit of processed film showing an army bomber pit with a few details of a sight that might, just possibly *might,* be the famous Norden bomb sight. Yes, everything had been working out well there. Slow but sure.

JOE'S ears picked up the rythmic *clip-clop* of an approaching horse. There had been a number of carriages pass. But this one, a *caratela,* drew up at the side of the road. It was the native two-wheeled rig designed for carrying six people or a light load of freight. There was no one in it but the driver.

Very carefully Joe twisted around, got his feet under him ready for action.

The driver tied his pony to the slender trunk of a young coco palm. Barefooted, he crossed over to the entrance ladder of the shack and called out softly in *Tagalog.*

The door slid back a crack. "*Ano ang gusto?*"

Joe strained his ears to catch the answer.

"*Lebre,*" the driver replied, then immediately returned to his *caratela.*

"*Lebre,*" Joe muttered, under his breath, moving on hands-and-knees toward the back of the *caratela.* The word meant "freedom." It must be their password. Joe smiled grimly, thinking of the sort of freedom these poor deluded fools would get if Kisaburo's plans worked out.

Perhaps the driver mused over this grand freedom that had been promised. No work, of course. Plenty to eat, plenty to drink and no white men, with their nagging insistence on responsibility.

The driver's musings came to an abrupt end. A pair of hands that must surely be those of *Dionisio,* reached out of nowhere and lifted him from his seat. His *camisa* was ripped off and part of it stuffed in his mouth. He was trussed up in an expert manner with the pony's tie rope, carried hurriedly out into the field and dumped. And all of this done with a silence that was uncanny.

Joe Lightning settled himself in the driver's seat, practised humping his shoulders. After a considerable wait the cracks of light from the house disappeared and three Filipinos walked out to the *caratela,* climbing into the back seat.

"Proceed!" one of them commanded.

Joe kept his face straight ahead, following the commanded directions, *cana* or *calew,* for right or left. Presently they were on Taft Avenue, heading northward.

He beat the diminutive pony without show of mercy, in good imitation of the average Filipino driver. It looked as though he'd picked a dud here. They were heading toward the walled city.

They skirted this and the palms of Joe's hands got sticky with the excitement that grew in him. After all, it was quite possible that Montgomery and the cache of rifles were someplace in the native section, between the Pasig River and the bay front.

An M. P. patrol of two men eyed them thoughtfully as they passed. The three Sakdals started singing a native song. Joe added his voice to this, knowing that his *Tagalog* was perfect.

The patrol turned their attention to

more important matters. The street light flashed on their polished brass and on the leather of their pistol holsters. Joe's left hand touched the knife under his belt, the one he'd taken from the dead Sakdal. He felt that curious intoxication that builds up with increasing danger.

The murky water of the Pasig was on their right, now, and a huge, rust-streaked freighter loomed ahead. A barge was moored near the stern of this, with a gangplank leading from the embankment.

At a command Joe pulled up to the embankment. The three Sakdals disembarked. After a careful survey of the road in both directions, they walked to the gangplank.

A shadowy figure rose up near the gangplank. Again Joe heard the word *lebre*. Undoubtedly that was the password.

Climbing down from the *caratela* Joe waited until they had disappeared onto the barge. He walked around to the back and felt in the straw-filled bed. As he expected, it was loaded with *paltiks* and with boxes that must be ammunition or explosives of some kind.

One of the boxes had a loose top. His exploring hands came in contact with something coiled, that felt like stiff, small-gauge clothesline rope. There was a round metal box. There were a large number of slender, oily cylinders.

Without knowing just why, Joe experienced a warm feeling of pleasure. Here was enough dynamite to sink that barge, with caps and fuse to set it off. But what chance would he have of using it!

Nevertheless he took one of the detonators from the metal box, slipped the fuse end into it and crimped it with his teeth. He took one of the dynamite sticks, gouged a hole in it with his knife, to make place for the detonator. But he had to stop then, hurriedly covering the box.

Two men came back down the gangplank, approached his carriage. "Assist us, comrade," they ordered. Each one of them filled his arms with the homemade guns.

Instead of guns, Joe took the box of dynamite, folowing them onto the barge.

THE BIG freight scow was flat-decked, with a crudely constructed house at its stern and with three hatches for loading. One of these was opened. A bamboo ladder pointed downward into the black pit of the freight hold. There was a perceptible slope upward toward the stern deckhouse, indicating that forward the barge was already well laden.

Joe balanced the dynamite on one shoulder, feeling for the ladder rung with his foot. He lowered himself step by step into the darkness and there was the cold feeling along his spine that he might never come out of the place alive.

At this moment, oddly, he thought of Major Sam Laifort who had detailed him on this mission. He felt a queer, choking proudness of himself. The major had said: "Attend to this detail at once."

Major Sam had known that it wasn't any small thing that he commanded. But he had known that Joe would obey him. That was the Service for you. Always demanding, always receiving, growing strong in the tradition of men who served.

That was the thing that Montgomery had shamed, by wearing its rank insignia. But, Joe thought, there would always be some who did things like that, just as there would always be spies, like this Saito Kisaburo. To his way of thinking Kisaburo was the better man.

Joe's foot touched the bilge decking. It was slippery with moisture. A dim light guided him along a plank walk toward the sidestep into eight or ten inches of the stinking, oily bilge water, so that the first carriers could pass him on their return trip.

"You are slow, lazy one!" the first man growled in *Tagalog*. "Return soon and we will smoke a *cigarillo* before carrying the next load."

The second man passed him without speaking. It was an evil place, this one. It laid cold hands on his spirit and made him surly with a fear of its black shadows.

There was one other man in the hold. He directed Joe Lightning with his electric torch. "Why did you not bring the

guns first?" he demanded and played his light over the cargo, selecting the proper place for Joe to stow this explosive.

Joe had a momentary view of what was there: *paltiks, bolos,* corrugated metal kegs that would be heavy granulated black powder for commercial purposes, that could be ground up for use in the muzzle loading *paltiks.*

There was enough armament here for a regiment! Enough explosive to blow up the government pier, to destroy bridges, to put an enemy army into the very midst of the defenders, to make a second Norway of the Philippines.

"There. Over there, you fool!" The man pointed with his flashlight.

Joe's voice was humble. "Señor Reye," he said, carefully depositing his box, "Señor Reye has commanded that you—"

Whatever mythical command Señor Reye had given was never learned by the waiting Sakdal. Instead a hard fist caught him flush on the angle of his jaw bone.

The flashlight described an arc through the surrounding gloom and landed unharmed on top of a neat stack of sheathed *bolos.* Its owner, with a noise halfway between a sigh and a grunt, crumpled down into the oily bilge water.

Joe cut rope ends from an old hawser, bound the unconscious man hand and foot. He gagged him with his own shirt, binding it in tightly with a torn strip. Then he took the flashlight and made a quick tour of inspection, moving it from one side to the other as he walked forward.

There was a side partition just ahead of the bamboo ladder and in this a door that was barred from the outside.

The sergeant opened this. It was a stores locker, filled with paint, a bosun's chair, coils of spare line and other marine necessities. At the far end of this, the after end, a man lay on a leveled pile of canvas, with his hands and feet bound.

He was lying on his side. He turned to his back, trying to sit up, as Joe moved the light over him. It was the kidnaped officer.

MONTGOMERY blinked in the unaccustomed light. His left eye was still blacked, Joe noticed, with an impersonal kind of satisfaction. And there were dark, greasy smudges on his face. Otherwise it was chalky with fear and when he spoke his words were jerky, as though he had been crying, like a child who is afraid of the darkness.

"I'll write the note! I'll write it! Please!"

He cringed away as Joe stooped slashing the cords that bound him. "I'm a friend," Joe said. "I've come to take you away from here. D'you savvy that?" The sounds that came from Mongtomery weren't words. Just animal noises of relief.

"Come on," Joe ordered. "Follow me!"

"I can't—I can't walk—I—"

Joe picked him up in his arms, like a baby.

"It was terrible," the man sobbed. "I tell you it was—"

Joe set him down on his feet. He swung on him deliberately with his open left hand. The captain was silent after that as Joe carried him forward, except for the spasmodic, gulping sounds that are made after a long spell of crying.

The Sakdal was returning to consciousness. There was no time to be wasted. Joe had made his plans as he went along. He bent now and struck the man again, savagely, back of the ear. Then he unlashed his hands and removed the *camisa.*

"Take off your blouse," Joe told Montgomery. "Then slip into this and wash your face in the bilge water."

Joe heard the squeaking sounds of weight on the bamboo ladder. It had been a lucky thing for him that the Sakdals had taken time for a cigarette.

Montgomery had the *camisa* drawn over his shoulders. "This water's stinking dirty," he complained.

"Yeah," Joe whispered, "but it should have a slick of black oil on it. Here," he scooped the oil-covered water into the other's face. "Now stand back there in the shadow and pretend to be stackin' things."

"*Luz!*" one of the Sakdals called out. "Let us have light here, comrade. We

are not cats, to see in this black pit of *Dionisio*."

Joe leveled the flashlight for them to see. At the same time he used his foot, trying to shove the unconscious Sakdal off farther into the shadows. If Montgomery were only half of a man, this thing would have been easy!

"It is the last of them," the Sakdal commented, in a relieved voice. "Where is that lazy one who drove the *caratela*?"

"Over there," Joe said, moving his light across the other's eyes to blind him, then flashing it briefly toward Montgomery.

The fool stared straight into the beam of Joe's light. But that oily bilge water had made his face black enough so that it would have passed a hurried inspection.

"Look here!" Montgomery protested. "How do I know—"

At the first word of English, Joe Lightning went into action. The flashlight swung downward in a quick, savage blow. Joe stepped over the body of his first victim.

"*Madre mio!*" The alarmed shout of the second native sounded very loud in the confined space. But the next instant he, too, dropped under a killing blow.

"You've murdered him!" Montgomery cried in a shrill voice.

"Most likely," Joe admitted. Then suddenly his temper slipped its leash. "An' he's not the only one I'll kill around here, you damned putty-head! Gimme some of that rope over there!"

JOE HAD them both tied, had slipped his capped fuse into one of the sticks of dynamite and had placed this with the other dynamite among the kegs of black powder, when there came a sharp, imperative command from the hatchway aft.

"We come, immediately," Joe called back in the dialect. "*That gums it!*" he muttered under his breath. He didn't have time to measure and cut the fuse. Any further delay and he'd have a bunch of them down here on top of him. He split the free end of the fuse and applied a match, holding it until there was a jet of flame from the powder. Then, half dragging Montgomery, he felt his way toward the ladder.

Joe led the way up the bamboo ladder, Montgomery following him. The man who had been sent to call them, satisfied at seeing Joe's head emerge, was already walking toward the small deck-house. Joe, pulling himself up over the hatch combing, breathed a sigh of relief.

"Tell the others to hurry," the Sakdal commanded. "There is to be a meeting of everybody."

This was going to be easy, Joe thought. Just one guard to attend to, then off the gangplank and he'd have a patrol here in five minutes. And in the meantime that fuse was eating its way toward the dynamite. A sweet setup!

He turned toward the gangplank and his hopes wilted. There were at least a half-dozen Sakdals walking up the plank. Apparently this was to be a general meeting.

"Keep your head," Joe whispered to the other white man. "Follow me. Can you swim?"

Montgomery didn't answer. He seemed to be moving in his sleep.

Joe was going to walk aft, as though to enter the deck-house, then make a quick run for it and over the side into the Pasig River, hoping that in the darkness they might get away. It was a slender hope. But it was the only thing left to do.

They were opposite the door. "Get set to run!" Joe commanded, in a hoarse whisper.

The door opened wide. There was an old ship's lantern hanging inside the door. The light from it was very bright to Joe's dilated eyes, but he saw enough to blast all hope that was in him.

He stared into the face of Saito Kisaburo. He saw the black, slant eyes widen for an instant in surprise, then narrow.

"Well," Kisaburo said, in English. "Well—" He paused. "So," thoughtfully, "well, this is so very nice. My stupid friend, who was never able to get just the kind of pictures that I admired. And this other one?"

"I have nothing to do with this," Montgomery protested, his voice desperate. "He forced me to come up here.

He—he threatened he'd kill me if—"

"No," the little man contradicted, pleasantly, "No, I shall be pleased to attend to that—for both of you."

Let that fuse be short! Joe prayed. *Please let it be short and burn fast!*

CHAPTER VI

JOE LIGHTNING RE-ENLISTS

Contoto watched "he big fellow sergeant" disappear through the *cogon* grass, headed toward the Pasay road. He scratched his thick skull. The idea was beginning to filter in that perhaps he had done something wrong. He couldn't imagine what it was.

He stooped and made a hurried search of the uniform discarded by the big fellow marster. These white people did the queerest, silliest things!

He found three silver pesos and some smaller change. He put this in his own pocket. There were triple "expert pistolman" bars on the uniform. He pinned these on his own chest.

The fellow marster had warned him not to tread in his footsteps that night. He might do queer things, that fellow sergeant, but Contoto had a wholesome respect for his commands. The Moro took great care to avoid tramping the same ground as he padded off toward the Pasay road.

It was not at all hard to follow the *calesa*. Contoto couldn't have explained just why he did follow it. Nor why he waited across the road from where the big fellow marster waited. But he sensed that there might be killing tonight. That was a diversion far superior to playing the drums or going to the theater to see white man pictures-that-moved.

Later, down on the embankment opposite the barge Contoto was faced by a serious problem. There would be no difficulty in killing that one who guarded the path to the big canoe. But he big fellow sergeant had warned him not to tread in his footsteps. How could he follow that same narrow path without doing this?

Contoto almost went to sleep, trying to figure out that one. It was a strange thing that deep thought always brought the sleepiness to him. He scratched his head. It was slightly tender from the pistol blow that he'd gotten a couple of nights before.

Contoto yawned again and thought drowsily that, after all, there probably wouldn't be any killing. If so, why hadn't he sergeant killed the three men who had ridden with him in the *caratela?* Very aimless and silly, these white people!

There was an outrigger canoe just a few feet beyond the barge. The Moro's cat eyes studied it. Two of the Sakdals had come back first, and taken more things from the *caratela.* They paused to smoke and talk in low voices. Had they done something to the he marster fellow?

Contoto's eyes returned to the outrigger canoe. It had a mast and he could see the bunched folds of a sail. He knew of a little inlet, not far from the village of Bangaan, of his home country. It would be pleasant to be there now, in that outrigger, a sputtering pitch torch in its bow, to attract fish.

The Moro straightened suddenly. But of course! There was a way to get on the big canoe, without stepping in the forbidden footprints. How clever of him to think of it!

He eased across the road and into the narrow canoe.

JOE LIGHTNING had no idea how long that dynamite fuse was. He hadn't had an opportunity to measure it. Nor did he know its speed. There was the military demolition fuse, with the red identification color. That was very fast burning. But this had been the white, commercial variety.

Kisaburo was talking, enjoying this situation to its fullest. "You were very clever," he said, "in the way you first approached me. That film you brought for developing—of course I took prints of all the pictures."

"Of course," Joe said. He wanted to prolong this conversation. If he could stretch it out long enough they would all go up in a blast of hell. "And you weren't so dumb yourself, Kisaburo."

The little man bowed. "Zank you, so much. But I confess to being not so clever. That debt you had with me—I was going to suggest that it was a small matter that could be forgotten—"

"If I brought you a better picture of that bomber," Joe supplied.

"Of course. Tell me, please—could that have been the Norden sight?"

"Naw, Kisaburo. Just a processed—an old Sperry sight printed onto a picture of our latest in bombing planes!"

The mouth tightened cruelly at this knowledge of how badly he had been fooled. "Yes. And now, Sergeant, you will be pleased to know that you are going back to your regiment."

Joe swallowed painfully, said nothing. He shot a quick glance over his shoulder. Those other Sakdals had stopped to talk with the gangplank guard.

Montgomery's voice was eager, fawning. "And I, too? You will send me back, you—Your Excellency?"

"Yes. Yes, Captain, I will send you back, also." Kisaburo moistened his lips. "In pieces," he added.

Joe didn't understand for a moment after that just what happened. Kisaburo's mouth sagged open, his eyes widened. He bent forward slowly, then pitched headlong to the deck.

With a skillful wrist movement Contoto removed his *kris* from the dead man's neck as he fell. "Not step in your footprints," he said hurriedly, so that there would be no misunderstandings. "Catchee canoe, other side."

"Watch out!" Joe warned.

One of the Sakdals, curious as to what was delaying Kisaburo, had stepped to the door.

Joe had his knife out. He leaped over the dead body, forearm rigidly extended. He sheathed the knife blade deep, under the Sakdal's breast bone.

A loud shout of rage broke the stunned silence of those inside the house.

The men at the gangplank had heard that shout. Their bare feet were drumming the deck.

Joe stepped away from the house. "Montgomery!" he shouted. "Over the side. There's a canoe over there!"

The man didn't seem to understand. Joe caught him by the slack of the *camisa*, pushed him to the gunnel of the barge, gave him a hard shove over into the blackness.

CONTOTO was backing up slowly, his *kris* arm working like greased lightning. He was shouting some wild, outlandish chant in his own language.

With a rush back, Joe put himself beside the battling Moro, hoping that the Sakdals wouldn't have sense enough to flank them.

His knife buried into the chest of a man. He couldn't free it of the slitted bone. Contoto's knife skill was uncanny, avoiding bone structure that would impede or grip his blade, killing them like so many hogs.

Joe had to let go of his knife hilt. He slugged one man and kicked another in the groin. They were near the edge of the barge now.

"Over the side, Contoto!"

Contoto didn't understand the English. Joe shoved him, heard the splash of his body.

A white-hot agony of pain entered Joe's left side. Men were springing at him from all directions. The keening whistle of a *bolo* grazed past his ear.

Joe ducked another blow, caught the man to him, let his own body fall with the other's rush. The deck scene flashed upward, disappearing. Water struck him with numbing pain.

Joe was struggling with the native that he had carried with him in the fall. It was an unequal match. The other was like a water rat.

They were on the surface, after a lung-torturing interval under water. The Sakdal's hands were gripped around Joe's windpipe.

Joe saw a paddle descending. There was a sharp crack of wood against bone. The grip loosed about his throat.

Brown, gorilla-like arms helped the sergeant up over the outrigger's stern. Joe lurched forward, gagging for breath, and stumbled over Montgomery and fell. The captain pulled himself distastefully from under the wet, bleeding figure.

Contoto was using the paddle, leisurely, as though it were a shame to depart from such a grand blood-letting.

"Hurry! Faster, you idiot!" Montgomery cried. "They'll shoot at us!"

"You better . . . hurry . . . all right," Joe panted. "'Cause there's goin' to be something else . . . happen—"

A blanket of red flame jerked skyward. The sergeant's warning was drowned under a tremendous, blasting roar. Where the barge had been, there was now a giant column of water, lighted by a flaming mass of debris.

"There," Joe said, weakly bracing himself as the blast wave caught up with them, "there's somethin' Uncle Sam don't have to worry about."

He reached for a paddle. His face twisted with the agony that was in his left side. The paddle dropped from his hands and he leaned back against the furled sail. "Land it, Contoto. Patrols come, *muy pronto* . . . Major Sam . . . enlistment . . . gotta re'-up, Contoto."

MAJOR SAM LAIFORT had Joe's personnel file on his desk, the enlistment papers on top. He shuffled his boots under the chair until his spurs caught a firm grip on the scarred legs.

This was all highly irregular and because of that it delighted the rebel soul of Major Sam. He hastily closed the file as his clerk opened the door. "That Goo-goo gal is here, sir," Wayne reported, with a lilt in his voice. *And boy, is she a looker!* he added mentally.

"Send her in," Laifort directed.

"Yes, sir." Clerk Wayne shifted to his other foot. "Major, is Joe—did you see Joe Lightning this morning?"

Unconsciously Laifort's glance dropped to Joe's new enlistment papers. "Joe'll be all right, Wayne. Ah, loss of blood an' a little hemstitching had to be done where they carved on him. Joe's tough," he added with pride.

"Yes, sir," Wayne agreed. "Any visitors allowed?"

"Hell, no! Got him in a private ward at Sternberg—that is, him an' the little Moro. Joe's still goofy from the ether they gave him." The major glanced at Wayne, raised his voice. "You hear that? He's still drunk on the ether they gave him, before they sewed him up."

"Yes, sir," Wayne agreed, wondering why Major Sam was so insistent on that point.

Wayne closed the door, but opened it again. "Captain Montgomery to see you, sir," he reported in a hard, noncommittal voice.

"Ah, good morning, Captain," Sam greeted, genially. "Nice to see you up and about so soon."

"Thank you," Montgomery said stiffly. "I—er—it was a terrible experience, Major."

He turned as the door opened again. His face stiffened at the sight of Anita.

The full, rich lips of the girl smiled on him. Her dark eyes lowered with the memory of words whispered to her in the sultry urgency of a tropic night.

Montgomery's face turned a brick red.

Major Sam leaned back in his chair, ecstatically clutching the rungs as though he was still in a cavalry saddle, where he had served so many years. "Captain Montgomery," he lied, "I have—ah, been appointed to investigate certain charges that were made against—ah, Sergeant Joseph Lightning."

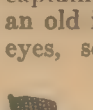
Captain Montgomery looked once more at the lovely Anita, then cast a quick, desperate glance toward the open window. "Yes, sir," he choked.

"Of course," Laifort pointed out, "we'll have to get an idea of the testimony that we can expect from the native witnesses. Very hard to get straight, pertinent information from such simple people."

"Major, I—that is, there will be no need of this, Major. I'll simply drop the charges."

"Hell, man!" Laifort exploded. "You can't do that. Not in this army. Now, young lady," he turned on Anita, "would you mind repeating what you told me yesterday?"

"You mean, meester Major," Anita's voice was soft, and there was a thrilling quaver in it, "you mean, how thees captain tell me I am so beautiful—lak an old ivory what you call statue? My eyes, so great deep with so soft—"



LAIFORT broke in on the girl's dulcet voice. "You see, Captain—damn hard to get pertinent testimony—minds wander around like children's!"

"But, Major—will it—is this girl going to appear at the court-martial!"

"Yes. Yes, naturally. Eyewitness and all that sort of thing. Now, Anita, you just talk as though you were in a court—that is, many officers with their swords, and the Bible to swear truth on, and the man who writes down all words you say."

"Ah, yes," Anita agreed, happy at that thought of so many men to admire her. "But you mean do I have loff for this little man?" She wrinkled her nose disdainfully. "That is so-o fonny, I laugh." And she did laugh. And it was a very pretty little trill of amused contempt.

But the captain didn't seem to appreciate it. "Major Laifort," he said desperately, "I—I've been thinking that perhaps this work here isn't exactly the—what I mean is, perhaps I don't belong—perhaps I could serve my country better outside the army."

"That's just possible," the major readily agreed. "In fact, I'll admit that the same thought has occurred to me. But it's too late now, with these charges standing against Sergeant Lightning's record. Now, Anita," he said sternly, "would you or would you not recognize the man who struck the Captain here?"

Her beautiful eyes were wide with innocence. "I theenk maybe it might be that fat cook man. He is another one who tells me I have an oh, so beautiful shape. There are so many," she said plaintively, shrugging and counting off on her fingers. "There is this Captain Montgomeries, there is the fat cook, —Juan who drives your car, the barber—no, I don' theenk I could remember."

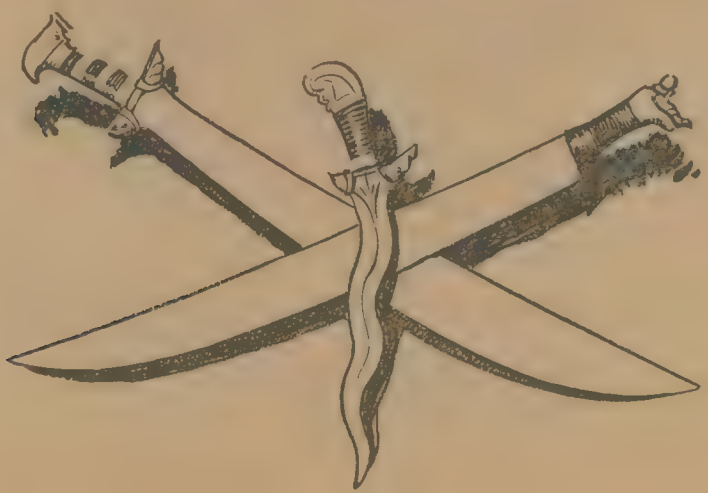
A crafty, desperate look had come into Montgomery's eyes. He cleared his throat. "Really, Major, I can easily understand this girl's confusion as to my assailant's identity. There was very little light. As a matter of fact, I would not be prepared to identify him myself. Er—after thinking it over though, I'm quite sure that it wasn't Sergeant Lightning. I—after all, Major, since I'm leaving the army—"

"You wouldn't be—hell's bells, man! Then there isn't any case. Miss Lichauco, you may leave. My man will drive you back. As for you, Montgomery—"

But the captain was already leaving.

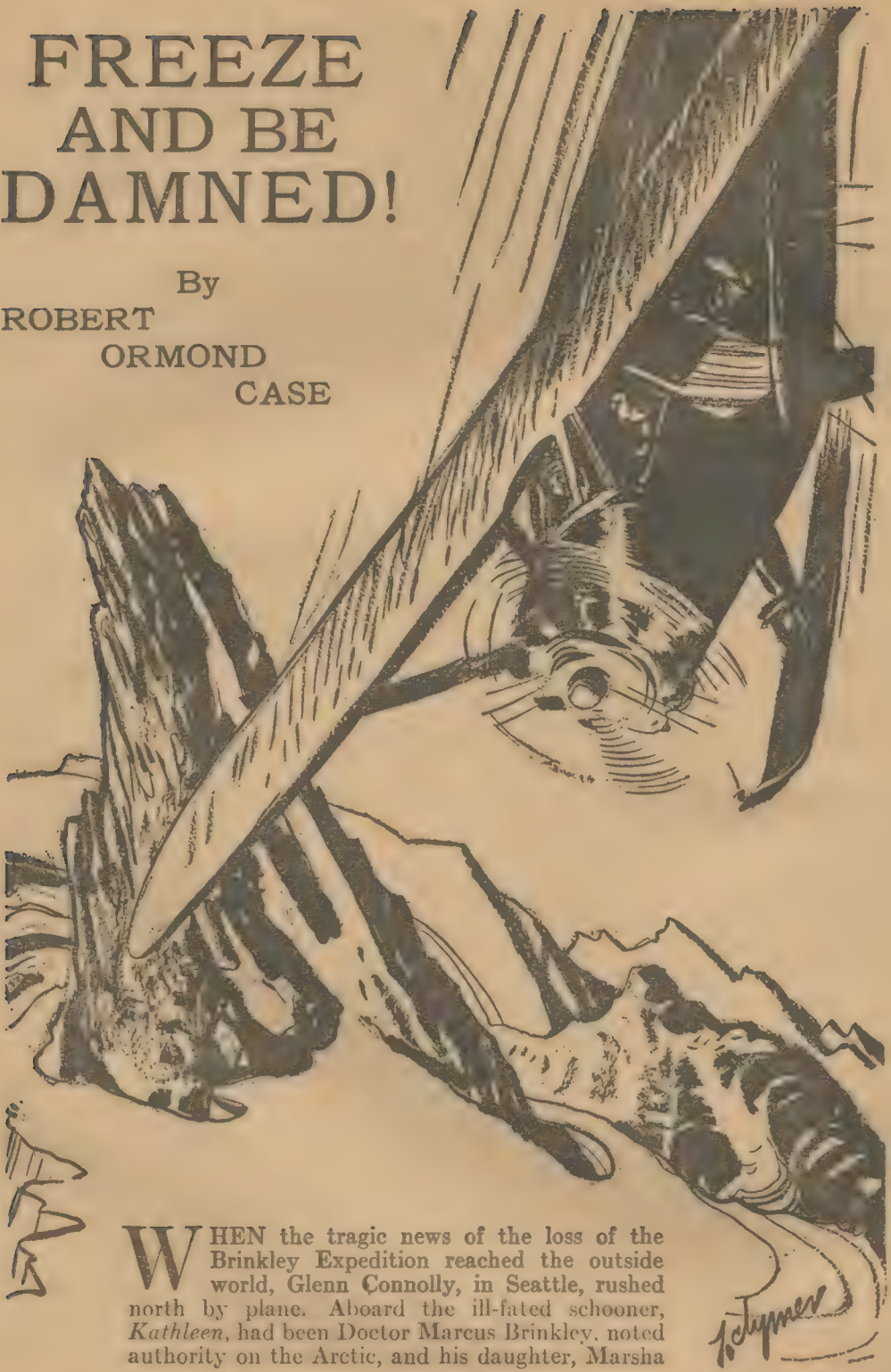
Major Laifort relaxed. He sniffed the heady perfume that Anita's presence had left in the air. "Not bad," he muttered. "Not bad, at all. Well, I oughta know—I paid for it. That's what it cost me to get her to memorize those lines."

He opened Joe Lightning's personnel file again, his eyes gloating over the enlistment papers that carried the fresh scrawl of Joe's signature. "Just comin' out from under the ether," he mused. "Should give Joe an excuse just as good as bein' drunk." He closed the file. "Hope next time it won't be such a chore gettin' Joe re-enlisted."



FREEZE AND BE DAMNED!

By ROBERT ORMOND CASE



WHEN the tragic news of the loss of the Brinkley Expedition reached the outside world, Glenn Connolly, in Seattle, rushed north by plane. Aboard the ill-fated schooner, *Kathleen*, had been Doctor Marcus Brinkley, noted authority on the Arctic, and his daughter, Marsha

. . . Catapulted from the door into space.

—Connolly's fiancée. A faint SOS, sent by the *Kathleen's* skipper, Jim Craig, had been picked up and relayed to Nome—*Kathleen crushed in ice and breaking up off Point McPherson—will attempt make land—little chance—no grub—one dog—*

Reaching Nome, Connolly learned that Ravenhill, enigmatic British flyer-adventurer, had just returned from a daring flight to Point McPherson. "Riv" had seen the splintered bow of the ship, talked with natives who said they had seen the whole party perish.

Connolly, refusing to abandon hope and suspecting foul play by Captain Craig, revealed that Brinkley, ostensibly in search of scientific data, had actually been on the trail of a platinum strike. Connolly attempted to charter Ravenhill's plane for a rescue flight. Ravenhill refused but offered to fly Connolly south next day. Pretending to abandon the idea of a search, Connolly accepted.

After the take-off next morning, Ravenhill nonchalantly admitted conspiring with Craig to cheat Brinkley out of the platinum strike. Connolly, at pistol-point, forced the Englishman to turn the plane north. Riv, admiring Connolly's unshakable resolve to search for the Brinkleys agreed to "try it once," and Connolly put away his automatic. They headed into the teeth of the wind.

Hundreds of miles to the north, Brinkley and Marsha, miraculously escaped from the ice pack—utterly exhausted, half-starving—had sought shelter in a rude cave. They had tied a note to Bolo, huge Mackenzie husky, headed him south towards the Endicott Mountains. With no food except moss-roots, they had little hope left.

Meanwhile, Ravenhill and Connolly made a forced landing on the ice of the Middle Fork. Ravenhill refused to continue farther.

Next morning, while Riv slept, Connolly set out alone on foot for Barter River. Ravenhill awoke, found Connolly gone, and headed south.

That night, wrapped in tarp and blankets, Connolly survived the arctic cold. He awoke to the sound of a wolfish howl. It was Bolo. When Connolly resumed his journey, the husky fell in behind.

After three days of battling the full fury of the elements, Connolly had traversed the pass and reached the tundra.

On the fourth day, he was within sight of his goal. Then, his strength gone, he collapsed in the snow. There the Brinkleys found him and took him to their rude shelter.

Marsha and the doctor were overjoyed to see him, although he had brought little more than two days' food supply—and his moral support. Dr. Brinkley told Connolly of staking a claim to the platinum strike before the wreck of the *Kathleen.* And Connolly described the conspiracy between Ravenhill and Craig.

The following day, the three set out, heading toward Barter River, eighty miles to the east—the Brinkleys weak from starvation, Connolly from the rigors of his trek north. Their supplies were pitifully inadequate.

In a crevasse farther on, the doctor and Connolly—unknown to Marsha—came upon traces of a recent campfire. Dr. Brinkley suspected it might be the abandoned camp of the two breeds, Hempel and Sloane—and even, possibly, Craig—none of whom were known positively to have perished. This was an added peril. Survival was the only law here and, to desperate men, Connolly's

meager provisions might be worth life itself.

The little party moved on through the cathedral hush of the "still cold." Marsha's condition had become the key factor in their long haul toward Barter River—and life. It was plain she could never make it on foot.

That night they reached one end of a great crescent-shaped bay. Near here the doctor had staked his platinum claim. Making camp in a small crevasse, Connolly and the doctor fixed a bed for the exhausted Marsha and set out to visit the claim. Far up the beach, they saw a lone fire blazing and presently came upon trails which converged on the stake marking the doctor's strike. The signature on the notice posted there told the story: *James N. Craig, Master of the Kathleen.* Here was final proof of Craig's existence—and infamy. Grimly, the doctor re-posted his own notices.

Returning to camp, they heard a faint roaring above the arctic silence, and, as it grew in volume, Connolly recognized the powerful drone of Ravenhill's plane. Good old Riv—back for one final effort to save Connolly from the consequences of his reckless courage. Hurriedly, they built a signal fire—but the plane thundered overhead, undeviating from its course.

Aloft, Ravenhill's attention was riveted on Craig's fire up beyond. He landed to find Craig and the two breeds overjoyed at the unexpected rescue. Ravenhill, having abandoned hope for Connolly, was about to take off with the three men when he at last caught sight of the other fire.

When they saw the plane returning, the Brinkleys decided to remain in hiding until the situation was clearer. Connolly waited alone. Craig stepped out of the plane, followed by Ravenhill —and the breeds, Hempel and Sloane, armed with rifles. Craig, now openly in command, told Connolly the plane was overloaded—he would send back for him when they reached Barter River. Connolly agreed.

Suddenly, Hempel swung his rifle around and Connolly, whirling to see Bolo slinking toward them, cried out: "Don't shoot—it's only Bolo!" Craig stiffened and Connolly realized his mistake. Only the Brinkleys could have told him the husky's name. Further evasion was useless. Connolly summoned Dr. Brinkley and Marsha from hiding.

When Ravenhill went to warm up the motor, Craig laid his cards on the table. He did not intend to surrender his claim to the platinum strike. They would all fly to Barter River and settle their dispute later. And—he warned them not to reveal to Ravenhill the location of the strike.

PART IV

THEY built up the fire until it roared. The Brinkleys and Connolly sat on the shore side, their backs to the headland. Craig was directly opposite, his rifle across his thigh. The breeds were on the left, their weapons likewise close. Ravenhill sat on the east—cheerfully dubbed by him the head of the table—cross-legged and alone.

Outwardly there was no disagreement; all had subscribed to the pleasant theory that the adventure was over, the hardship and danger past. There was ample food for one huge meal and no longer a need to conserve it. By air, whenever it was mutually agreeable to take off—a minor point—it was but thirty minutes to Barter River.

It was Ravenhill who set the tempo of the moment. It was plain that the stakes of the game—any game, any stakes—were of less interest to Ravenhill than the playing. Winnings were important, as he had stated in Nome. "Bales of the filthy is what I must and will have." But the game, always, was the thing. Closest to his heart was the situation itself. Two forces in direct conflict. Ravenhill in the middle, the key man, his intended course of action unknown.

He dominated the conversation and Connolly played up to him. Their jokes referred mostly to the past. For the first time the Brinkleys—and Craig—learned the true reason why Ravenhill had flown up to the Endicotts with Connolly. It was not for love of Con-

nolly, Ravenhill asserted; it was because Connolly's gun, an annoyingly efficient .38 automatic, was in his ribs.

Connolly denied this, pointing out that Ravenhill had made the bulk of that flight of his own free will; that Ravenhill actually was a sentimentalist and had been touched. Ravenhill scorned the suggestion; sympathy was not in him. They had been flying blind in the jaws of the storm; what difference whether they flew north or south?

"There's a detail," said Connolly. "I've wondered about it. What happened to that thirty-eight?"

Ravenhill was pained at the question. It was embarrassing. What had happened seemed to indicate that he, Ravenhill, was guilty of a breach of trust. . . He had been forced, in a manner of speaking, to pawn the gun. Down at The Crossing. The grasping trader there had had five barrels of high-test gas cached; but would he fill Ravenhill's tanks on credit? It appeared that he, Ravenhill, had no credit; it had taken all his remaining cash, his watch and the .38—to which the trader had taken a decided fancy—to square the account.

"And you flew over on that gas?" said Connolly, delighted. "Wasn't that cutting it a little thin, Riv?"

"Thin?" Ravenhill echoed. He appealed to the others, with a raised eyebrow. "I flew over the Pass. He walked over. Yet the gentleman accuses *me* of being a gambler!"

"I had a reason," said Connolly, looking at Marsha.

Ravenhill shrugged. "Callow sentiment again. . . Still, that's a field I propose to explore when we have a little leisure, Connolly. Philosophically, I mean. Who knows but that I've been sitting at the feet of a master?"

CHAPTER XV

CONNOLLY'S DICE

THE food melted before their onslaught. The beans went first, then the slum. Marsha recklessly mixed successive batches of flap-jacks until the flour dwindled to the bottom of the small sack. Finally it was the last batch; she shook the empty sack ceremoniously and tossed it aside.

"What about Bolo?" she wanted to know. The dog was grinning hopefully at her elbow. "What does he rate?"

"Just one," Connolly voted. "He could last a week on that slab of bacon."

"Not any," said Craig. "We can't take him along. The ship's crowded to the limit already. We'll have to shoot him. Or leave him behind to rustle for himself."

Marsha glanced up. "We'll do nothing of the kind, Captain," she said quietly.

"We can leave our equipment," the doctor suggested. "That would offset Bolo's weight."

Craig looked at him, his features expressionless. "That's an idea, Mark."

There was plenty of coffee, after the food was gone. Ravenhill passed his cigarette case. After the breeds had helped themselves, Ravenhill took a cigarette and tapped it against a polished nail.

"There's more at Barter River," said he. "Everything worth while begins at Barter River." He blew a smoke ring upward. So still was the air that it rose up writhing and twisting and yet retaining its shape until the higher gloom claimed it. "Not bad. Almost perfect, in fact. I must try it again." He made the plunge casually. "Barter River's our destination, I take it?"

"Suits us," said Connolly. He was equally matter of fact. "Can you do it in one trip?"

"It'll overload us a bit." Ravenhill tilted his head back. The second ring was faulty: it elongated, contracted, broke apart as it disappeared. "Still, with a long take-off, we can manage it."

"Let's go, then," said Craig, leaning forward.

He did not actually rise, but shifted his rifle across his knee. At his glance the breeds licked their fingers hurriedly and likewise took up their weapons.

"We shall, Craig," said Ravenhill. "I've a question to ask first. . . How close is the platinum strike, Doctor?"

On the instant all pretense was stripped from the scene.

"Don't answer that," said Craig. "You

hear me, Mark?" He heaved to his feet and the breeds followed, their rifles ready. "Back a little farther, boys," Craig directed. "Stand in the clear. Remember what I told you. I know this lobo. He's decided to turn tough on us. Give him half a chance and he'll leave us all here to freeze and starve. . . All right, Riv. I warned you. Spread your hand—fast."

THE crisis had leaped up, full-grown. Four were seated at the fire. Three armed men were between the fire and the ship. It was plain that Craig had already moulded the breeds to his purpose, however grim it might be.

Yet Ravenhill seemed to draw enjoyment from the very forces his question had unloosed. His coffee cup was in his left hand, his cigarette in his right. He sat thus, elbows resting on his knees, and looked up under an arched eyebrow.

"My word, Craig! Our naked souls are unlovely things, eh? An hour ago, when your belly was empty—"

"Skip that," said Craig. Food had done that much for him—his warring passions were no longer on the surface. "I counted you in. You're still in, provided you toe the mark. Otherwise—out."

"But really, Captain"—Ravenhill waved both coffee and cigarette—"you're exaggerating the importance of what I asked the doctor. The strike's already located and staked, of course. That would be obvious to a blind man. So my query was perfectly natural. . . Or was it? Perhaps you can shed some light on this, Connolly, my old chechako?"

It was both an invitation and a challenge, though Connolly was not aware how much depended upon his reply. He merely followed his hunch; hew to the line, deal fairly with Ravenhill—and trust to Ravenhill's sporting instincts in the final pinch.

"The strike's about four hundred yards from here, Riv." He pointed with his thumb. "Just inside the mouth of that creek."

"Really?" Ravenhill looked at him with an expression he could not fathom. At least there was approval in it. "How big is the bally pot? Worth all these various gymnastics?"

"I wouldn't say that," said Connolly, smiling a little. "It's big, though. Eh, Doctor?"

The doctor accepted his part, now that the die was cast. The greater the stakes, the greater would be Ravenhill's eagerness to share them.

"It's a concentrated deposit, a terminal moraine. I sampled it sketchily, of course, but values begin at the moss-roots. I don't know how deep it goes. I thawed and washed several surface samples. It's free platinum. My samples averaged about an ounce to the pan."

This statement—to those with a working knowledge of placer—was downright staggering. It meant, if the doctor's surface borings represented true values, that the continent's richest field had been located.

"My word! . . . Come—" Ravenhill tossed his cigarette into the fire and leaped nimbly to his feet—"let's sally over and look at the ground, eh? It shouldn't take but a moment."

Connolly caught his warning glance and rose with him. He helped Marsha up and the doctor, too, came up with an effort.

"I'm staying here," said Craig. "You can't see the ground. There's nothing there but the monuments and claim notices."

"But whose notices?"

"I don't know—and care less. Ravenhill, you said something about witnesses. Listen close. You, too, boys. Remember what I'm saying. . . I located and staked the claim three weeks ago. It's in my log. When I came along the beach today I found that Doctor Brinkley had jumped the claim. I tore down his notices and put my own up again. It doesn't make any difference whose are up there now. I'm filing at Nome."

He paused, scanning their faces. The quartet stood silent. Apparently this silence enraged him.

"Well? No argument, Mark?"

"Perhaps you'd better deny his statements, Doctor," Ravenhill suggested. "If facts permit."

"His statements are obviously false," said the doctor. "I made the original

discovery. When the *Kathleen* was wrecked, ten days ago, Captain Craig offered to save my life and Marsha's if I would tell him where the claim was located."

"Ridiculous," said Craig. "There was no such conversation."

The doctor appeared to have nothing further to say. Ravenhill nodded to Craig. "We'll sally along, then. You don't mind waiting a few minutes?"

"Go ahead," said Craig, his face flushed. "Tell me this first, Riv—and never say I didn't give you a chance. . . Are you with me or against me?"

"Tut, sir," Ravenhill said. "My loyalty has never swerved from the beginning. You know that. I'm for Ravenhill."

"Bah!" said Craig. "Go on, then."

Ravenhill inclined his head and gestured toward the mouth of the creek. "Come, Connolly. . . You'll accompany us, Doctor?"

"Try to leave us," said Marsha, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

RAVENHILL and Connolly led off, the Brinkleys followed, the dog trailed at their heels. Away from the fire the cold was searing. They walked in silence at first, adjusting their hoods so that their faces were protected.

From the mouth of the creek they looked back toward the fire. Craig and the two breeds were busy, piling on more fuel. As they watched, the flames roared up so vividly that cliff, ice and ship were bathed in radiance. For the first time a great pillar of smoke mushroomed skyward.

They went on up the frozen surface of the creek. View of the fire and ship was cut off. Connolly spoke guardedly to Ravenhill.

"That's funny. Why should those jokers build up the fire when we're about to take off?"

"Quite simple," said Ravenhill. "I don't claim to have a spectroscopic eye, but I suspect that wool and down and waterproofing canvas made that blaze we saw."

Connolly grasped it. "Good Lord! Our equipment?"

"Why not? We decided to abandon the stuff, you recall, to make room for the dog. . . Still, it's an anti-social gesture to destroy good equipment." Ravenhill's tones were faintly ironic. "Some weary pilgrim, afoot, might have passed this way."

They went on, into the broadening glacial groove. They mounted to the left and shortly came to the stake marking the corner of discovery.

Ravenhill looked at it but did not light a match to read the claim notice. "Yours, Doctor?"

"Yes."

Ravenhill motioned them to stand close. They formed a compact group, shoulder to shoulder, a tiny huddle of life marooned in the immensity of the night. Their eyes glistened in the shadow; the vapor of their breath rose up in a single column.

"Listen closely, please." There was no lightness now in Ravenhill's voice; it was concise, hard-bitten. "We're alone here. I brought you here for two reasons. The first was to satisfy myself of the physical existence of the strike. This is it, eh? Cornering here and extending the usual distance up the canyon?"

"Yes," said the doctor.

"From now on, much between us four will have to be taken on faith, sir. It's a valuable platinum deposit?"

"Yes. Millions, possibly."

Ravenhill nodded. "The second reason we're here: to find out how far Craig's prepared to go. We should know almost immediately. . . You see, the four of us are here. He and his savages are alone at the fire. He's already destroyed your equipment. You probably don't know it, Connolly, though the doctor does, that the odds would be against any of us surviving more than forty-eight hours by an open fire. At this temperature there's no substitute for rest and bodily heat. To reach Barter River afoot would be entirely hopeless. . . Do you see the possibilities from Craig's viewpoint?"

"No," said Connolly. "Not as long as you're here. He can't use the ship. . . " The impact of an old memory came home. He stared at Ravenhill. Somewhere earlier in the game, when they had been winging toward the Koyukuk,

Ravenhill had mentioned something about Craig and flying. . .

"Correct," said Ravenhill, calmly. "That's the joker. In a pinch—he can. The blighter qualified for a private license several years ago, but abandoned it. He didn't have the stomach for flying. Still, he'd have confidence that he could take off, cross the mountains, wreck the ship somewhere over on the Chandalar—and walk in according to his original plan. He could easily explain—"

"Wait," said Connolly, aghast. "Are *you* crazy, Riv? Why leave Craig alone at the ship—"

"Hark!" The doctor gripped their arms with unconscious strength. "What's that?"

The sound that stole across the sea of quiet was easily identified: the mounting whine of the ship's manual starter. While they stood, motionless, it rose up and up to a throbbing crescendo. The sustained note became jerky and spasmodic; it was turning the motor over.

"Good Lord, man," Connolly whispered. "He's taking off. If you knew all the while—"

"Softly," said Ravenhill. "It's all right. We're just smoking him out—putting him on record, so to speak. . . He won't take off."

"Why not?"

"Quite simple," said Ravenhill. "I've a part of the timing mechanism in my pocket. Without it, there's no spark. No spark, no motor. No motor means that our friend Craig is also afoot. . . He'll discover that presently. With his face quite red, I hope."

THE distant whine of the manual starter dwindled and died. It began again, rising to a peak. Once more it faded. Then the silence was broken only by an angry murmur.

A question leaped into Connolly's mind.

"Look, Riv. Craig's smoked out, all right. We know where he stands. But aren't we still in a spot? He's armed. We're helpless. We've got to get back to the fire. Where do we go from there?"

Ravenhill shrugged. "Who knows? One thing's sure. Our cards are all on the table now, our aims in the open. No more double-dealing and jockeying for position. Something can be worked out."

"What's is *your* aim?"

"Mine? It hasn't changed from the first, old chap. Just a finger in the pie."

"How much?"

"You're so literal," Ravenhill protested. "It's undignified. I'll rely on your generosity, of course."

"You can depend on that," said the doctor. "If we've anything to share."

They started back, with Marsha and her father in the lead and the dog trailing at their heels. To Connolly it was a step by step advance toward disaster. The dimensions of their dilemma—unappreciated or disregarded by Ravenhill—were growing by the minute.

Possession of the timing mechanism had precipitated an immediate showdown without bettering their hand. It had stopped Craig, true, but it had also forced him into the open, with all his alibis broken down. Moreover, added to his criminal intent was the most formidable of all fighting urges—self-preservation. It would be easy to persuade himself—and the breeds—that he must have the timing mechanism or die.

"Listen, Riv"—the Brinkleys were ahead and Connolly could speak freely—"there's got to be a good brand of poker played over yonder."

"True," Ravenhill agreed, calmly. "And I've every confidence in your ability."

Connolly looked hard at him. This was the same phrase that he himself had used when he had forced Ravenhill to swing north up the Koyukuk. But the gloom hid Ravenhill's expression.

"You mean you haven't got a play figured?"

"No. I'm just a spectator. A Good Samaritan, rather, who's constantly repaid with a gun in his ribs. First you, then Craig. . . No, indeed—the play's yours, old chap."

He proved it in striking fashion. He moved closer and his mittened hand thrust into Connolly's a small, hard, circular object. It was metal, and already searingly cold. "The commutator head.

Your ace in the hole, in a manner of speaking. Make the most of it."

Connolly thrust it into his pocket, surprised and a little dubious. Ravenhill sensed his unspoken question.

"A bit off-key? Not at all. It's just that I don't trust myself where human stakes are involved. I'm inclined to undervalue them. But they're precious to you. You're entitled to defend them to whatever limits your judgment dictates."

THEY came into view of the headland and the tableau there. The two breeds were on guard at the ship, whose cabin lights were on. The nose hangar lay where it had been carelessly tossed, leaving the motor's cylinders exposed to the cold. Craig was back at the fire, peering in their direction.

"Ah!" Connolly held Ravenhill back, pointing. "Look—he's alone there. No more poker-playing. No bluffs. . . Those breeds are tough only as long as Craig's top dog, eh?"

"Right. Craig's the nut to crack."

"Right. So we'll crack him. . . We come up to him on each side, you and I. We argue with him, listen to him and move in closer. When I'm near enough I'll tackle him. And I mean—tackle. The Rose Bowl's best. Once we've got his rifle—"

Ravenhill interrupted him with a gesture. "Force isn't the answer. D'ye think Craig's taking any chances, now that he's out of his thicket? One false move and he'd mow us down like wheat. He'd claim self-defense—anything. Remember that whoever walks away from that fire, alive, will have the most convincing story of what occurred. The *only* story."

"Good Lord, man!" Connolly said. "What *is* the answer?"

Ravenhill shrugged. "Your dice, gambler."

They drew closer to the fire. Craig was standing facing them, his rifle cradled in the hollow of his left arm. His right hand was bare, and he raised it at intervals to his lips—blowing upon the swollen fingers, flexing them. . . They were aching fingers, Connolly knew.

"You don't think he's entirely crazy, Riv? Beyond reason?"

"Not Craig. He'll never be too insane to weigh his chances."

"We'll reason with him, then," said Connolly. "We'll start with an asking price and wait for the breaks. . . Just a second, Doctor."

The doctor and Marsha halted, waiting for them. They, too, had just concluded a debate. The doctor stated their findings dryly.

"We've decided that we're not greatly interested in platinum, Glenn."

"We're allergic to it," said Marsha. "We'll just go on taking notes and writing text-books."

"You won't," said Connolly. "You're going to swing a broom and fetch carpet slippers and hang out the wash. And like it."

"Just as you say," said Marsha, with pretended meekness.

"Incredible!" Ravenhill said. "At fifty below and our lives hanging by an eyelash."

"The point is," said the doctor, "that all values are relative. Let Jim have any part of the strike, or all of it. We prefer the climate to the south."

"Let's go, then," said Connolly. "You'll back me up, Riv?"

"Within limits," said Ravenhill. "Sporting limits. I guarantee nothing."

They came into the circle of radiance, shoulder to shoulder. They ranged up beside the fire, drew off their mittens and spread their hands to the heat. Craig, formidably self-possessed, studied their faces in turn.

CHAPTER XVI

A QUESTION OF TIMING

THERE was an interval of silence while each side waited for the other to make the opening play. It was broken by sound from the ship; the breed, Hempel—lesser force of the hybrid pair—was arguing with Sloane, his hoarse whisper rising and wavering on a hysterical note.

Sloane cut in, his words savage and distinct. "Shut up. The cap'n says so, and that's final. It won't be long."

It wasn't long. Ravenhill looked toward the ship, with an appearance of surprise.

"You've got the hangar off, Craig? That's industry, I must say. You tried to start the motor, too?"

"That's right."

"D'ye call that cricket? We're all friends here, you know. Positively bulging with mutual trust and all that."

Craig moved a little closer, so that the light and heat of the fire strengthened upon him. He tugged at his ice-encrusted parka, pushing back the hood so that his view widened to right and left. The gesture revealed his features more fully—dark-veined, bristling, touched with a determination of purpose far more impressive than his usual blustering air.

"You took the timer off, Riv." His voice was hoarse, but under control. "Where is it?"

Ravenhill shrugged. "We can't tell you that, of course. Not until we've achieved a meeting of minds. I may have it. Connolly may have it. Any of the three of us. . . Not Marsha, of course."

"One thing you can depend on," said Craig. "We're not going to stand here and play 'button, button—who's got the button?' If you've got anything to say, I'll listen. But make it fast."

Ravenhill inclined his head and looked a little away, to his left. It gave him, more than ever, the role of spectator.

"Your cue, Connolly, I think?"

"Very well," said Connolly. "I've a deal figured that ought to suit all concerned. . . It's simple, Craig. We all want to get out of here. We've got a ship that will carry us all. The thing that holds us back is the strike. You want your split. So does Ravenhill. Ravenhill has earned a cut, but you haven't. But you want it, anyway. There're three of you, armed with rifles. Against that, we've fixed it so you can't use the ship. Right?"

"You have the floor," said Craig.

"And I'll state the proposition," said Connolly. "Split the claim fifty-fifty. Half to the doctor. Half to you and Ravenhill. You post the claim jointly, as joint discoverers."

There was a momentary silence. Ravenhill murmured: "Generous, I'd say. Quite. If the doctor agrees."

"No objection," said the doctor.

Craig considered it, his heavy-lidded glance fixed on Connolly. His vigilance did not relax.

"Sounds good," he said, at length. "What else?"

CONNOLLY smiled a little. "More boot, eh? Right. We give you a written statement signed by all of us giving you a clean bill of health. You'll be in the clear as to the *Kathleen* and all the rest of it. Doesn't that protect you completely in every way?"

"Sounds reasonable," said Craig, watching him. "So we all fly out together?"

"No," said Connolly. "There's got to be a little evidence of good faith. . . We post the claim jointly. We give you the signed statement. Then you have your boys bring their sleeping bags over here to the fire. The Brinkleys, Ravenhill and I—and Bolo—take off with the ship. . . Now wait," he admonished, as Craig's face darkened again. "Remember what we've already agreed on. What you want is half the strike and no skeletons in the past. All we want is to get out of here. Just listen to the deal."

"I'm listening."

"We fly to Nome. You and your boys spend the night here by the fire. Ravenhill—or someone designated by the Coast Guard—will be here in the morning. You're on the ground, guarding the claim. You're posted there as joint discoverer. You've got our signed statement. So you're entirely protected."

"Good!" Ravenhill said. "Excellent. Even if we were as crooked as Craig we couldn't double-cross him under those circumstances."

Craig was unmoved. "Don't pat yourselves on the back yet. I'm not sure I like it. I know my boys won't. For instance, once you've taken off what's to prevent you from forgetting we're here?"

"Nonsense," said Ravenhill. "Use the old bean, Craig. Do you think *I'll* forget, when my half interest depends on you? My guarantee that I won't."

"I'll make that guarantee final," said the doctor, unexpectedly. "If you were *certain* there'd be no slip-up, Jim, you could make no objection?"

"That's right," said Craig, turning a little toward him. "But words won't do it, Mark, old pal. No, nor signed statements."

"I can guarantee it beyond doubt, however."

"How?"

"Quite simply," said the doctor. "I'll stay here tonight with you and the breeds. You can be certain that the rest wouldn't abandon me."

"No," said Marsha, with instant apprehension. "We won't leave you with them, Dad."

"Yes, we will," said Connolly. "The doctor's right, Marsha. If Craig's on the level about being satisfied with half the strike, all bets are coppered. . . Look, I'll stay, too."

"I want no part of it, then," said Marsha, firmly. "I'm staying also."

"My word!" Ravenhill spread his hands in comical resignation. "Does this mean that I'm heading for Nome with the blighted dog as my only companion? Come, come, gentlemen!"

Craig was not amused. There was something about the man, in his present mood, that was as emotionless as the cold that pressed about the fire. Somewhere in the deeps of his mind he had reached his decision.

Yet, when he spoke, it was almost in reasonable vein.

"Maybe we've struck it, at that. . . We post the claim jointly. The doctor writes out a statement that puts me in the clear. The boys and I stay here tonight while the rest of you fly out to Nome. You come back tomorrow to pick us up, Riv. . . That it?"

"Right."

Craig nodded. "Very well," he said. "It's a deal."

Marsha relaxed with a sigh. Her relief was so overwhelming that it brought tears to her eyes.

"Good!" She looked from one to the other, smiling. "I knew it! I knew we were all civilized enough to get together."

Her voice trailed away. The others, disregarding her, had attention only for Craig.

"Swell," said Connolly. "Give your boys a yell, then. Have them over here with their equipment. Then the rest of us will move over to the ship."

"No," said Craig. "I'd better go over and put it up to them. It'll take persuading. Write out the statement, Mark. Come along with me, Riv."

Ravenhill did not move. "Why should I?"

"I'll tell you why," said Craig. "When the motor wouldn't start a while ago the boys got the jitters. They still have. You're the lad who jimmied the motor. You're the only one who can sell 'em the theory that it'll start again—and also, why it's up to them to stay behind when the ship takes off." His left hand held the rifle in position. He blew upon the fingers of his right and dropped them to the trigger guard. "Come along, Riv."

"Why not?" Marsha cried. "For goodness' sake—"

"Quiet, child," said her father. "You can depend on my word, Jim. Keep your bargain and we'll keep ours."

"Sure," said Connolly. "It's on the level. Go along, Riv. Let's get under way."

Ravenhill looked at Connolly, his cheerfulness fading. In his gaze was something close to pity.

"You think I should, eh?"

Connolly smiled. "I know what's worrying you. A little question of timing, eh? A word in your ear about that. D'you mind, Craig?"

"Go to it," said Craig. "You're smart, boy."

CONNOLLY drew Ravenhill aside and they stood with heads together. Their talk, in whispers, was brief: Connolly persuading, Ravenhill holding back. . . In the end, Ravenhill stood silent for a space, twirling his mustache thoughtfully, up at the sky.

Then he turned, with an abrupt gesture. "Very well, gambler, if that's your judgment. Your dice, you know. . . Come, Craig. At your service."

Craig motioned him toward the ship. Midway, Craig spoke guardedly.

"Don't talk until you're spoken to, Riv. When you do, just be sure you make it quiet."

Ravenhill gave him an oblique glance that also included the group at the fire. Marsha and Connolly were seated side by side on the driftwood, facing toward them. The doctor sat a little apart, his notebook on his knee.

The two breeds spread out as they came close to the ship. Their rifles were ready. The frost of their breath rose up from their hooded figures.

Sloane whispered: "What's the word, Cap'n?"

"Hush," said Craig. "D'ye know what they tried to put over? A deal that would leave us here on the ice while they flew to Nome."

An animal sound came from Hempel: "No, no! You promised—"

"Quiet, fool," Craig said. "I'm protecting you. I'll see you through. Just do as I say."

Sloane's reply was formidable in its simplicity. "Will it mean killing?"

"It might. If it does, we'll leave no tracks."

"You're a rabble-rouser, Craig," Ravenhill murmured. "Mind they don't turn into Frankenstein monsters on you."

"Get inside," said Craig.

Ravenhill went into the cabin, with Craig following close behind.

"Stay there, Hempel," Craig directed. "Watch them at the fire. It won't be long. . . Follow me in, Sloane. Get in back of Ravenhill. Sit down at the controls, Riv."

They moved into place, rough clothing rasping against seats and walls. The door closed behind Sloane, and the remnants of warmth in the cabin closed soothingly upon them.

"Lay your rifle down, Sloane." Craig was hunched against the curve of the fuselage, facing Ravenhill. The lights were off, but the figures of all were plain in the gray shadows. "Get out your knife."

Ravenhill turned a little, the whites of his eyes glistening.

"Melodramatic, old chap. Unnecessary. I'm unarmed."

"Sloane," said Craig, "cut off a strip from the tarp. Fast. . . Don't move, Riv, and get this. If the boys and I have to walk away from here, we go alone. Understand?"

"H-m-m," said Ravenhill. "At this late date—I believe I do. . . D'ye mind if I smoke?"

"Smoke later."

Sloane's loud breathing was overridden by the harsh tearing of the heavy fabric. He fought with the hemmed edge, cursing, then cut it clear with his knife. "O. K., Cap'n."

"Hands behind you, Riv," Craig directed. "Straight back. As high as you can."

Ravenhill did not move. He sat relaxed, his left hand on the wheel, his right across his thigh.

"Easy, old chap. You don't have to tie me up. Just name your deal."

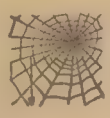
"Behind you," said Craig. His teeth clenched suddenly, and he brought up the butt of the rifle. "Straight back."

Shrugging, Ravenhill brought his hands back. His arms were extended around the back of the pilot's seat and the harness of the 'chute suspended there.

Sloane grasped his wrists and brought them together, crossing them.

"All right," said Craig. His trembling subsided. "Two wraps both ways and tie it tight."

"Not too tight," said Ravenhill. "Circulation, you know."



RAVENHILL kept his hands clenched while the knots were being tied. When it was done he relaxed, helpless, but the circulation in his wrists was unimpaired.

"Well?" he demanded.

"The timer. Where is it?"

"I'm in cooperative mood," said Ravenhill. "Connolly's got it."

"I thought so. What were you two whispering about?"

"More boot," said Ravenhill. "Connolly suspected some such play as this. He wanted to give you the whole strike, if necessary. They're all quite anxious to see you satisfied, you know."

"Bah!" said Craig. "No dice on a deal that leaves me and the boys here. The minute you four were in the clear, what would a written agreement amount to?

The Brinkleys would claim it was forced and it would have no standing at law. Sure you would fly in for me tomorrow—with the marshal and a warrant. With you sticking together on your story, where would I be?"

"On the way to the jolly clink," Ravenhill agreed. "I tried to point it out to Connolly. But he's tough. And he fancies himself to be something of a gambler."

"We'll have him over here," said Craig. "We'll see his hand."

"We?"

"Yes," said Craig. "And I'll tell you why."

He turned and looked through the side windows toward shore, then opened the door and gestured to Sloane.

"Outside, Sloane. Keep Hempel calmed down."

The breed went, drawing on his mittens. The door closed behind him, and immediately talk began between the hybrid pair.

Craig lowered himself to a seat beside Ravenhill.

"The pay-off, Riv. . . This thing was clean until you threw a monkey wrench into it. I was in the clear. So were you. Now I've got to go all the way."

"*I* threw a monkey wrench into it?" Ravenhill said. "You've a consummate nerve, my friend. After warning you that no man can successfully double-cross me twice—"

"Never mind," Craig cut in. "That's all in the past. I'm going to have Connolly over here. He's tough, but we'll soften him. You can do it, because he'll listen to you. And you'll do it right. Because I want that timer. . . If I don't get it, there'll be no alibis. The boys and I can make it to Barter River afoot. We kill the dog, which gives us meat. But if we have to go—afoot—we leave a clean slate behind us. I mean—clean. Just the three of us, heading east. . . Understand?"

"Jove!" Ravenhill said, blinking. "This is disturbing. I believe you mean that, Craig."

"Mean it? You've always lived a feather-bed life, Riv. Just like Mark. Or Connolly. You've never frozen or starved. Even now you haven't missed a single meal. *I've* fought this country for forty years—and now it's caught up to me. I'm shooting the works on this play. Win, lose or draw—"

"The build-up's unnecessary," Ravenhill cut in. "We'll agree that you've made up your mind and hurry on. . . You could dispose of the four of us, of course, provided you had the stomach for it. And no clues. Not even a hole in the ice, eh?"

"Not even a hole in the ice," said Craig. "Outside the barrier there's plenty open leads. And the current rolling along underneath."

Ravenhill nodded. "Grisly details intrigue me. . . The ship?"

"Simple enough. The boys and I push it to the fire. We break the gas line—and run. Afterwards, only the motor's left. A few metal parts. Anybody who comes along next spring could see what happened. That reckless fool, Ravenhill, crowded his luck too far. Everybody knew he would, sooner or later. X marks the spot."

Ravenhill stared at him. Insane or not the man was now beyond the pale but his shrewdness had not deserted him. No living man would have reason to suspect that the four victims—the Brinkleys, Connolly and Ravenhill—had succumbed to other than natural causes. The Brinkleys were already officially listed as missing. It would be accepted that Connolly had perished on the Pass. It would be easy to deduce what had happened if his, Ravenhill's bones, were mingled with those of the ship. . .

"Well?" Craig demanded. "You playing ball?"

"And if I do—what?"

"Leave that to me."

"My word, sir! Sight unseen? Relying on your generosity and good judgment?"

"Exactly."

Ravenhill knew the man could be held back no further.

"Very well. Let's have done with it."

Craig turned and opened the door. It sent the breeds sprawling.

"You mangy sons! Listening, eh?"

"No, no," Hempel cried. "We couldn't hear. We are cold. How long—"

"Quiet." Craig squatted there and

beckoned them close. "I'm calling Connolly over. Remember, he's tough—and desperate. Stand on each side, out of his reach, and cover him. Understand?"

"Why wait?" Sloane asked. "Why not drop him when he comes close?"

"Not yet. We get the timer first. . . All right, now. Get set."

"Connolly!" Craig's voice rang along the barrier, rebounded from the cliff. "Come over here a second."

CONNOLLY did not move. Marsha and the doctor leaned in toward him. They whispered. Then Connolly said: "How about it, Riv?"

Craig turned his head.

"Talk fast, Riv. Tell him to bring the gadget with him. And the doctor's statement."

"It's quite all right, Connolly," said Ravenhill. "Join us, by all means. Everything's arranged. Bring the commutator head and the doctor's statement with you."

Connolly did not hesitate. He rose, stamped his feet and flexed his arms, then bent beside the doctor. The doctor tore a leaf from his notebook and handed it to him. Marsha drew closer to the doctor and leaned against him, her hand on his.

It was an unconsciously pathetic pose. The whole tableau held pathos. Most pathetic of all was Connolly's completely confident manner of coming on.

He halted suddenly, turned on his heel and returned to the fire. He went to Marsha, lifted her to her feet and held her close, their lips together. It was a long embrace. He released her, patted her shoulder and turned to the doctor. They gripped hands briefly. If anything was said, none heard it but the three.

Then Connolly came on again, and this time did not hesitate or look back.

"A masterly touch," Ravenhill murmured. "Masterly. . . He hopes for the best like all these damned sentimentalists—and coppers his bets by kissing her good-bye!"

As Connolly came close, Craig made a sign to the two breeds. They raised their rifles.

"Hands up, Connolly," Craig said.

Connolly looked at him and slowly raised his hands.

Craig stepped close to take the commutator.

"I hid it back there," Connolly said calmly.

Craig's face contorted with passion. "You're trying to double-cross me now?"

For an instant Ravenhill was afraid Craig would kill Connolly where he stood, forgetting that he needed Connolly to find the commutator.

"Listen, Craig," Ravenhill said. "Let me talk to him."

Craig leaned in the doorway of the plane.

"Let me loose," Ravenhill whispered. "I can manage him. Give me a minute, two minutes and I'll have him tied up here."

Craig nodded and cut the canvas strip that bound Ravenhill's hands behind him.

Ravenhill climbed out. "Come on, Connolly," he said.

He walked beside Connolly back toward the fire. "Give me the gadget," he said. "I see one more chance."

Connolly walked into the dusk beyond the fire and picked up the commutator head.

Ravenhill motioned him back toward the ship, talking as they went.

"But if we're to put it over you'll have to let me tie you up," Ravenhill finished.

CHAPTER XVII

WITH ALL BETS COPPERED

RAVENHILL was in silhouette as he came out of the plane, the timing mechanism in one hand, his tool kit in the other. Beyond, Connolly sat slumped. He was next to the controls, his body leaning forward.

Ravenhill swung down, ducked under the wing strut and came up beside the motor. He motioned Craig to join him there, but Craig opened the door and looked in. The thing was done; Connolly's wrists were not only secure behind him, but were tethered rigidly to the back of the seat.

"Good," said Craig, his breath sighing between his teeth. "Good. This spikes your guns, chechako. You'll sing low from now on."

Connolly gave him a smouldering glance but said nothing.

"Get inside," Craig told the breeds.

They clambered in. Craig moved over to stand below Ravenhill, who was already up on the motor.

"Smooth work, Riv. Mighty smooth."

"Don't be too big an ass, Craig," Ravenhill said. "This is a new role for me. Quite distasteful. Don't insult your intelligence or mine by applauding it."

"You get the doc's statement? Let's see it."

"Presently, presently." Ravenhill bent over the motor. The clinking of his tools rang in the night. "Listen to how I managed Connolly first. I had to make a few promises."

"Promises?"

"Naturally. The boy's no moron, you know." Ravenhill turned himself about, wiping his grease-smeared hands. "I agreed that we'd leave the Brinkleys here tonight. You and I and Connolly, and your gentle savages, will fly to Nome. At Nome—"

"Promises!" Craig cut in. "The hell with them. We've got the timer now. Where's the doc's statement?"

"Listen to me, sir," said Ravenhill. "Do you want the platinum strike—clear title to it, and no criminal record involved? Or do you prefer to have four murders, or more, hanging over you?"

Craig shrugged, with heavy humor. "All right, all right. Let's hear it."

"That has a distressingly casual sound," Ravenhill complained, blowing on his fingers. "Still, we'll risk it. . . We fly Connolly out. In Nome, he makes an affidavit that's worth a cool million to you, to wit: that he knew—last fall in Seattle—that the Brinkleys planned to jump your claim."

Craig stared at him.

"Did Connolly agree to that?"

"No less. When I persuaded him that the Brinkleys' lives depended on it, he broke down and was ready for anything. It clears the whole record. Nothing the Brinkleys can say later—"

"Wait. There's a joker in it."

"I know," said Ravenhill. "I can almost see the familiar wheels moving. We can't take chances on having Connolly running at large in Nome, eh?"

"He's dynamite."

"Precisely. So I forced another concession from him. It was the ultimate test of his faith in me. . . We get Connolly's affidavit *before* we take off. We fly him across the mountains. But not to Nome. Once we're on the other side. . ." He snapped his stiffening fingers. "I know the precise spot! Head of the Middle Fork! Where I went with Connolly before. We set down there again and toss him out. He can't possibly get down to civilization, afoot, in less than two-three weeks. . . Jove! I ask you—is the old bean working?"

"H-m-m," Craig ruminated. "Not bad. We leave Connolly there and go on to Nome. . . Record the strike and affidavit—"

"And come back here," said Ravenhill. "Connolly's out of the way. The Brinkleys don't know where. Would they make trouble when Connolly's life might depend on it? The answer is no. Absolutely. They'll agree to anything. They'd head Outside immediately, if we gave the word. . . So we've coppered *all* bets."

Craig was plainly jolted. The claim would be recorded in his, Craig's name, and Connolly's affidavit would guarantee its title beyond dispute. The doctor's statement, unchallenged, would preclude criminal action forever.

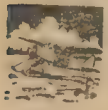
Still he considered, his ravaged face impassive. Ravenhill knew dark forces were in conflict there: greed and caution on one hand, old hates on the other.

"Connolly's already written his affydavy, as a matter of fact." Ravenhill brought out two folded pages of paper. He was casual—as casual as though he were unaware that his own life, too, depended on this one play. "Here they are. Including the doctor's. . . Read them quickly. Then turn the prop over, if you don't mind, so I can check the points. We'll soon be out of here."

He turned back to his work but his attention was on sounds at the rear: the rustling of unfolding paper, the later murmur as they were folded again. Craig moved forward to the prop. Though the

motor and the ignition were dead, it was typical that he stepped outside the prop's possible sweep. He stood for a moment glowering up at Ravenhill, and then grasped the blade.

Ravenhill glanced in at Connolly, who was on his same level and separated from him only by the forward windows. Connolly had watched his face from the first, with desperate intentness. Ravenhill nodded slightly.



WHILE the manual starter whined to its peak, Connolly sat rigid, looking out toward the fire. The doctor and Marsha were in silhouette there, close together and hand in hand. They were like two children watching mutely, without protest, while stronger playmates left them behind. They would soon be alone, just as they had come in from the pack, bitter days before.

The callousness of the whole gesture —even his own enforced part in it— struck home to Connolly.

"We're a fine bunch. Look at those two over yonder."

"Don't look," Ravenhill counseled.

"What d'you say, Craig?" Connolly twisted to look back. "I've figured this so you'll have the whole works—all the profits, all the gravy—just so the Brinkleys'll be in the clear. If anything happens to them, d'you think you'll enjoy your winnings?"

"Shut up," said Craig.

The motor coughed, died away, took hold again and roared on a sustained note. Ravenhill allowed it to warm up slowly, the throttle retarded. He tilted his head, listening to its sustained clamor, and glanced over his shoulder to see how the ship was trimmed.

The load was compact. Connolly was at Ravenhill's right, Craig and Sloane immediately behind, in the folding seats. Hempel was at the rear but crowded close. The two breeds had their safety belts fastened, as did Connolly. Craig had merely braced himself, his right foot against Connolly's seat support and his left hand gripping the 'chute harness suspended from the back of Ravenhill's seat.

It was a stance that left him ready for any emergency that might arise. He and the breeds had their rifles ready. Connolly was bound, Ravenhill unarmed. At an instant's notice, Craig could brush Ravenhill aside and take over the controls.

"I'm not satisfied with this arrangement, Craig." Ravenhill raised his voice above the drone of the motor. "Understand this: I'm piloting the ship. Keep it in mind. Don't overestimate your own flying ability. You haven't touched a stick for ten years. You've never handled this much power; you haven't the feel of it—"

"Nuts," said Craig. "Let's go."

Ravenhill shrugged and turned back to the controls. He gunned the motor and waggled the stick, testing the feel of aileron and rudder.

"They're a little stiff," he said, throttling down. "Some ice on the tail surfaces, I think."

Craig's lips tightened. "Ice? How could there be ice?"

"The cylinder walls sweat. Until the motor warms up, this moisture is blown back by the exhaust. . . . It isn't bad, though. No, we'll chance it."

The streamlined hull about them throbbed and shook itself free. The motor thundered and reverberated in the night. The ice sped below, the headland disappeared at the rear, and they mounted smoothly toward the stars.

Ravenhill held due east, climbing steadily, while he adjusted the stabilizer to the load. He began to veer to the south, ever climbing, and continued in a wide are that brought them above the headland. They were far above, so high that the area of radiance about the fire was lost and only the fire itself twinkled there.

Then swinging a little east of south, Ravenhill held the ship in the steady climb necessary to clear the mountains. The continental barrier, remote and austere as great, frozen waves, mounted skyward as they advanced.

"I thought you'd be heading more to the west," said Connolly, rousing.

"Our route isn't direct to Nome," said Ravenhill. "We're going by way of the Middle Fork."

"So?" Connolly turned. "Why?"

"I think you'd better light up first, old chap." Ravenhill brought out his cigarette case. "You'll need it, no doubt." He placed a cigarette between Connolly's lips, lighted it and did the same for himself.

"No kid gloves, Riv," said Craig. "Connolly's tough. Let's see how he takes it. . . . *I'll* tell him."

"Do so, by all means," said Ravenhill.

The ship tossed a little, as on unseen breakers, then steadied again.

"What should I be told?" Connolly demanded.

"This," said Craig. "I've your statement giving me title to the claim. You'd be excess baggage in Nome. So we're going to set down on the Middle Fork and unload you. It'll take you a couple of weeks to walk out. . . . Not bad, eh?"

Connolly sat motionless, for a space, looking at Ravenhill. Then he said, quietly: "Not bad. . . . You're in on this, Riv?"

Ravenhill nodded. "It's not cricket, I must admit."

"You were in when you got the affidavit from me?"

"Right. Ravenhill's hide was also hanging by an ear."

"That explains everything, of course," said Connolly. "But what about the Brinkleys?"

"It's up to Craig. I gathered, though, that Craig's more interested in the strike than in the Brinkleys."

"You gathered wrong," said Craig. "I'm still interested in the Brinkleys. . . . Make anything you like out of that."

CONNOLLY sat silent, his narrowed eyes studying the curling smoke overhead. The ship rolled again, fell away, righted itself and climbed on. Rolling foothills were below them, the iron peaks dead ahead. The motor was laboring.

"Odd," said Ravenhill, his eyes glued on the panel. "We're nowhere near our ceiling. We've a heavy load, but not too heavy. Is it possible that *more* ice is forming on our tail?"

"What's wrong?" Craig demanded, leaning forward.

"I'll feel safer when we've lost a bit of our load," said Ravenhill. "And I'm not keen about setting down unless we've got plenty of landing area. Somehow the bally ship doesn't seem properly trimmed."

"Riv, what do you mean—you're not keen about setting down?" said Craig.

"Just that. It's a small lake, and the ship's a bit logy. We're safe as long as we have plenty of altitude. . . . I was wondering about Connolly."

Connolly looked at him, his cigarette motionless on his lip. Craig leaned in between them.

"I was thinking about him, too."

Ravenhill was silent, staring at the peaks ahead. They had gained their altitude. A vast, snowy saddle-back was before them. Beyond, across what appeared to be a misty chasm, another barrier loomed: Connolly recognized both. These were the giant dimensions over which Connolly's insect trail had meandered during the finale of the second storm. The farther barrier was the Pass.

"Jove!" Ravenhill said. "Connolly, you come from a hardy breed."

"Listen," said Craig. "We'll soon be across the Pass. What were you thinking about Connolly?"

"Eh?" Ravenhill glanced at him and raised his shoulders. "You've a ghoulish soul, Craig. You've been thinking about murder so long that you can't rid your mind of it. . . . No, we won't toss him overboard. There's a big glacier on the other side. Even if there's wind—I mean to say, more wind—Connolly could make a safe landing, I think."

"I don't get you, Riv," said Connolly.

"The 'chute, of course," said Ravenhill. "Why risk all our lives landing on that bit of a lake? It would be simpler if you'd bail out above the glacier. You'd make it, I'm quite sure. Then you could go down on foot to Klena George's cabin."

Connolly looked at him, and at the 'chute harness. His cigarette glowed as he inhaled deeply; then he dropped the glowing stub to the floor and swung his heel over it.

"That's out, Riv. I don't know anything about 'chutes."

"They're quite simple. Fool-proof, in fact." Ravenhill glanced at him with a raised eyebrow. "My word, Connolly!

Have we at last stumbled on something that you haven't the stomach for?"

"Don't." Connolly huddled lower in his seat. His voice shook. "Do I have to, Riv?"

Ravenhill leaned forward, disengaged the harness and tossed it back across Craig's knees. "You're out of character, old chap. Or are we really getting acquainted during our last five minutes?"

The saddle-back known as the Old Pass lowered before them and the vastness of the farther basin tilted into view. At this altitude—their highest—they were in the grip of the wind that blew eternally across the bitter peaks. They rose and fell on unseen billows, careened and righted again.

Then they saw the farther snowfields, and the long sweep of the glacier. The sensation of height returned swiftly as the terrain fell away. They had cleared the Pass by two thousand feet, and each thousand feet forward brought a deepening of the abyss below.

"Very well, sir." Ravenhill's voice was matter of fact. "Hold up the 'chute, Craig, so it can be explained to him. . . . You step through here." He indicated the body-supporting design of the harness. "Your arms through here. Cross these straps and snap them. That's all."

"The rip-cord," Craig prompted, with relish.

"It's this ring here. Get your fingers through it before you step off. Hang onto it. Count five—and pull."

Connolly sat huddled. Then he said, in a small voice: "Cut me loose. I'll try it."

"Good—though lacking a little in enthusiasm, perhaps. . . . Now, you've better than five thousand feet to work on. Get into it while I bank to the left. The wind's from the northeast. If you missed and came down into the canyon it might be a bit rough. . . . Jove!" Ravenhill gripped the wheel suddenly. "What's this?"

HE HAD brought the ship around in a wide, easy bank. It now fell away on its left wingtip, at the same time nosing over as though gripped by an unseen hand. There was no sensation of a spin, at first: the world merely came up and up and began to wheel—the ship stationary, all space about it turning with gathering momentum. Ravenhill fought for control, with a muttered imprecation, and brought the stick back sharply.

The tight spin began. Each was frozen to his place, pressed down as by a living weight. The sense of falling was blotted out by that fierce, centrifugal thrust, but directly past the nose of the ship the glacier was spinning closer—rampart following snowfield and rampart again.

The deadly crisis had leaped up as at a snap of the fingers. Yet Ravenhill was cool.

"There's something wrong." He was fighting with the controls like a juggler. "We're not—pulling out of it. . . . That damned ice. . . ."

"Neutral—in neutral position, man!" Craig shouted. "You're making it worse."

Ravenhill shook his head. "Nothing works. Sorry—we're cracking up."

"Cut me loose!" Connolly panted. He tore at his bound wrists. "Don't leave me like this, Riv! Give me a chance. . . ."

His appeal was the spark that brought chaos to the cabin. When the strong failed, the weak lost hope. Hempel screamed on a high note—a rabbit squeal, involuntary, nerve-shattering. Craig thrust himself between Ravenhill and Connolly, grasping the stick. Ravenhill rose up, free of his safety belt, and faced the breeds.

"Back in the tail." His commands were like the lash of a whip. "Back! It's your only chance. . . . No use, Craig. We're done for. Quiet, Connolly, old chap. Meet it like a man. . . ."

The roll of the ship faltered; the wheeling of the glacier slowed and halted, swung down and out of sight. The nose of the ship was pointed skyward, aimed at the stars. For an instant, at the peak of its climb, all seemed to lose weight and substance, suspended in mid-air. . . . Then the ship fell away again into the abyss.

This spin was terrific. The struts screamed and the streamlined hull groaned throughout its length. Craig turned away from the controls, teeth bared, one hand clutching the useless wheel, the other gripping Connolly's

shoulder. Ravenhill had an arm locked through Connolly's for support, his eyes looking out past the ship's nose. The breeds were in the tail, pressing themselves back like animals. At two hundred feet a second, the ship was hurtling toward the glacier.

"Cut the ignition, man!" Ravenhill thrust at Craig's scrambling bulk. "Cut it! There—at your left."

But Craig thrust on, clawing between them. Ravenhill swayed over Connolly to allow him to pass, then bent across the pilot's seat. His hand was on the ignition switch but he did not actually cut it.

"Riv!" Connolly's shout rang above the turmoil, strident with horror. "The *'chute!* Take it and bail out. Never mind me—think of the Brinkleys. . . ."

But Craig was already writhing into the harness.

"Stop, sir!" Ravenhill shouted. "Connolly's the lad. Let him have it—"

It was too late. The last snap clicked home and Craig lunged toward the door. He thrust it partly open against the roaring slip-stream, his knee against it and his body stooped to plunge through, but his right hand braced, holding him back. In that instant, a gleam of reason piercing his frenzy of self-preservation, he glanced back over his shoulder. A question was imprinted on his features, a doubt struggling with his fear.

The question was never uttered. With a cat-like movement Connolly brought his body around. His arms were pinioned to the chair but his torso pivoted at the waist. He placed his feet against Craig and in a piston drive sent him through the door, catapulting into space.

THE door crashed shut. Connolly's body was doubled into an awkward, suffocating position. He was like a gymnast balanced on the back of his chair, anchored there by his bound wrists. Ravenhill did not help him. He was at the controls, working with desperate speed gunning the motor, neutralizing the stick, advancing the stabilizer whose false position, making the ship nose-heavy, had induced and exaggerated the spin.

When the ship eased into a straight power dive, and from that flattened out, skimming the glacier at what appeared to be a narrow margin but was in reality a good three hundred feet in the clear—a full, fat second short of a crash—Connolly was able to worm his way back into a seated position. Ravenhill had a small penknife in his hand. He could not at first use it, having to bank the ship against the east rampart and so back over the glacier; but as they leveled off he opened the knife, an eye on the ballooned 'chute above them, and cut Connolly's bonds.

Connolly's wrists were bleeding. Realism had entered into his stage struggles in those last, reeling seconds.

"Up, Riv!" His voice shook. There was no exultance in it yet; only the awe of a gambler fearful of the whim of smiling gods. "Climb!"

Ravenhill climbed, but only as part of a gesture. The ship flattened like an eagle against the west rampart, roared down again across the glacier. He snapped on the interior lights so that he and Connolly were clearly visible. They swung by on a wing-tip, so close that the shrouds of the 'chute were plain in the reflected light.

Craig's bulk was clear, suspended there. Horror was on his upturned face when it seemed that the knife-edged wing was about to cut him in two. But the ship was under perfect control. That fact brought comprehension to Craig; and rage. Connolly felt it, fleeting as the exultant moment was. Craig was entitled to no pity, no more than a hunting animal in a thicket, a marauding wolf at the closed gate.

Yet it was hard to see a strong man broken. It was certain that Craig knew, in that instant when he moved into the ship's light, in what manner he had been cheated on the final play. His own selfishness had trapped him; and all his ruthless shrewdness could not now change the verdict. For two weeks, just as he had planned for Connolly, he would be lost in the wilds. During that interval the stakes toward which he had grasped so desperately would be safeguarded against him forever.

They were already remote. The signed papers in his pocket, obtained under duress, were only additional evidence of

his guilt. Dreamed millions were gone. He was in the grip of laws that could not now be brushed aside.

If Ravenhill was touched he gave no sign of it. By pantomime, as they roared by, he rang the curtain down. His open hand came up to his forehead and out again in careless salute. There was no gloating in it, nor in his manner of inclining his head a little, bowing over the wheel. It was—as from one actor to another on a dimming stage—merely a graceful, sardonic gesture of farewell.

Then the ship banked upward from the glacier in the wide spiral necessary to gain altitude to recross the Pass.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DRINK FOR RAVENHILL

RAVENHILL refused to leave his place at the controls when the ship slid to a halt opposite the headland. He throttled the motor to idling speed and relaxed, waving a hand toward the fire. The Brinkleys were huddled there, gripped by both hope and misgiving. Until the door opened they could not know whether friend or enemy was in command.

Only the dog seemed to know, through some canine sixth sense. It refused to leave the Brinkleys, though plainly torn with eagerness. It trotted back and forth excitedly, head and tail erect.

"Your big moment, old chap. Conquering hero, spoils of victory and all that. Make the most of it."

"Come along," Connolly urged. "You put it over."

"Rot," Ravenhill returned. "You planned it. It was your acting at the finale that sent friend Craig into the proper frenzy. Come, sir, let the laurels rest where they fall. The lady's waiting."

She did not wait long. Connolly thrust the door open, swung down, and charged across the ice with a singleness of purpose that Ravenhill found humorous.

"Like a homing pigeon," he murmured aloud. "Like a wolf on the fold. . . . To whose virgin lips could you turn in your moment of triumph, old beagle?" He sighed, reaching for his cigarette case.

The Brinkleys were circling the fire to meet Connolly—stumbling with weakness, supporting each other, their hands stretched out toward him. When the three came together Ravenhill looked away. He twisted to scowl at the two breeds, trussed and prone in the tail of the ship, covered with a blanket.

"We're back at the fire, my hearties," he told them. "You're excess baggage. Is it quite all right if we toss you out on the ice?"

But when Hempel began a low wail, like a beaten, hopeless child, he relented.

"It's all right. I was only spoofing. We'll take you to Nome. Direct to the jolly brig. The jail."

"Suits me," said the hard-bitten Sloane. "It's warm."

When the Brinkleys and Connolly came on, arm in arm, with Connolly in the middle, Ravenhill turned the searchlight on them to light the way. They were coming empty-handed, bearing not so much as a ragged blanket. But something about their faces reminded Ravenhill vaguely of two plays he had seen, long ago. One was the fadeout of the *Three Musketeers,* striding in triumph up to the throne on a cloth of gold.

The other—this was suggested by Marsha—was of a gypsy girl standing in a stone-paved courtyard, facing the spotlight with dimpled cheeks, flashing eyes and upturned head. What *was* that solo? One grew rusty on such details in the blighted North. Something about how this gypsy girl, sleeping on cold stones, had dreamt she dwelt in marble halls. . . .

A sudden realization jolted Ravenhill from his reverie. It was three hours to Nome, a long haul. Frightfully long. It wouldn't do at all after they had taken off. Quite all right with Connolly and the doctor, no doubt, but it might make Marsha ill at ease, a little dubious about his flying skill.

He fumbled hastily in a small compartment, low and to the left. There was just time for it—a long one, a deep one. The flask was out of sight and he was relaxed at the wheel, awaiting their pleasure, when the Brinkleys and Connolly, chuckling, arrived at the door.

THE END

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

LESLIE T. WHITE, whose "East of the Williwaw" begins this month, is off by plane to the Mato Grosso as we go to press, hot after more first-hand material for future South American stories. About the new serial he says—

It is difficult for a promiscuous old campaigner to be sure just when or where a brain-child was conceived, or who fathered the idea. There are a lot of infested spots in the south end of the world where I might have picked up the story bacilla. Neptune's Bar, in Valparaiso, is a likely place: Valpo was alive with German agents when I was there a few months ago. Talcahuano gave me the conflict between German tanker crews and British armed merchantmen. There were a couple of Heinies hiding in the harbor and the Limeys were getting mighty irked at standing outside the three mile limit waiting for them to come out. I went into Talcahuano on a Norwegian freighter and the British merchantman followed us in and slammed her hook down within hailing distance of the German freighters. A few months before there had been six Germans hiding in the harbor, but one by one they had sneaked out to sea in a fog and evaded the British ship to keep their secret rendezvous with either the *Admiral Scheer*, the pocket battleship, or submarines—no one knew just which.

It was while we picked our way through the tortuous channels of the Patagonian Archipelago that I gleaned a little more about the activities of the famous, or infamous, pocket battleship, the *Admiral Scheer*. My old detective experience came in handy at this point. I pumped the Chilean Straits pilot; I found a friendly German among the black-gang; I picked up rumors here and facts there. I did a lot of research concerning the summer of 1915 when the German *Dresden* lay in an uncharted and unexplored inlet somewhere between Innes Island and William Island off the southern edge of Tierra del Fuego. In Punta Arenas, which the natives refer to as *Magalhaes*, I heard of the German sympathizers who had sneaked provisions out to the *Dresden*, and of the same crowd that are suspected of provisioning the *Admiral Scheer* at this time.

There is no place in all the twenty-two thousand miles of South America which I covered last year which intrigued me as much as Tierra del Fuego and the Patagonian Archipelago. It's truly a fabulous land. The only difficulty it presents for fiction material is that being relatively unknown, people sometimes suspect one of exaggeration in the telling of it.

Maté Cocido is a real character, both in name and profession. I crossed his trail deep in the Argentine Chaco and in the fringes of the Mato Grosso, the wild hinterland state of Brazil. He beats Robin Hood at his own game.

But Tierra del Fuego—I wish you could see it! It's difficult to refrain from super-

latives. Land of Fire! With its fiords, its tremendous glaciers, its snow-crested peaks and barren slopes, wrapped in mists and mystery, its hidden valleys, its gulfers, its Alacalufs—the little known canoe Indians who offer the only remaining link with the Stone Age—and best of all its he-man history, all lends itself admirably to stories. I was tempted to use the word *fiction* instead of *stories*, but there is so much that is factual to this story that it can hardly be termed pure fiction.

Prophecy in this present World War is foolhardy, but don't be surprised if one of the decisive naval battles of this struggle is not fought in the neighborhood of old Cape Stiff and Magallanes. The Horn dozes now, undisturbed these many years since the sunset of the clipper era, but the indications are that the great guns of war may break that long sleep.

La Querancia is a poetic word used by the gauchos to mean the *place to which you will always return*, and so it was with a bit of sentiment I thus named the paradise estancia cradled among the snowy mountains of Tierra del Fuego. For like old Mike Reynolds, I, too, remember her grandeur and breath-taking beauty, and hope that some day I may again watch her loom out of the mists.

We've spent a good deal of time with Mr. White in the past few months since he returned from Tierra del Fuego, listening to tales of his trip (he's as good a raconteur as he is a writer) and trying to make friends with "Ivan the Terrible," the pigmy marmoset he brought back with him in a coconut shell from Pará. Despite the fact that Ivan weighs less than four ounces (full grown!) and is the smallest living primate in the country we must confess we didn't get to first base with him. He's about as easy to get acquainted with as a king cobra and has teeth like needles. We found that out the afternoon we tried to win him over with a demi-tasse spoonful of viosterol and orange juice, while his owner stood by, remarking between each nip Ivan took at our fingers, that all we needed to do to make the beast like us was be gentle and patient. After that episode we left Ivan to his own devices and took the vitamin D ourselves.

We're a little irritated with L.T.W. for the moment—not because his pet attacked us—but because he bamboozled us out of a trip to Florida last week. We'll give you the lowdown on *that* at the end of this department—space permitting!

KENNETH PERKINS is a new recruit to our writers' Brigade. Like his fellow fictioneers around the campfire he's been places and done things in the far corners of the world and we're glad to welcome him to our ranks. He says, by way of introducing himself—

I was born in a hill station of British India—Kodai Kanal, in the Madras Presidency. Had my boyhood schooling in another hill station—Ootycamund. Both of these towns are surrounded by jungle-covered mountains, where there is plenty of big game, even to this day. The traveling then was by bullocks, and bandies, and now it is by motor bus—but the countryside is the same as it was before the East India Company, or the Great Moguls.

Went through high school in San Francisco. My first composition which ever brought any returns was one telling of the famous old pioneer characters after which the streets of San Francisco are named. The payment for this historical essay was a book of tickets good on the Sutter Street cable cars. I spent my summers on ranches, learned how to use a lariat, ride a horse and punch cattle. My favorite sports then were canoeing and horseback riding—which have since given way to yachting. I was always a great lover of dogs but because of danger of hydrophobia in certain parts of India I could not gratify my desire to own them until I was older.

Attended the University of California, where I received a Master's degree. Taught English for two years at Pomona College in the mesquite and sage and sierras of Southern California.

Working sometimes as ordinary seaman, sometimes as a waiter on board ship, I obtained first hand acquaintance with the scenery and life of the Pacific—Hawaii, Guam, Japan and the Philippine Islands.

My brother also loved the sea. He was wireless operator when the *State of California* went down in Gambier Bay, Alaska, in which wreck he gave up his life. Both of us inherited our predilection for the sea from our grandfather, a pioneer of the Gold Rush days. The latter's barkentines and schooners were known for years on the San Francisco waterfront.

During the war I was a lieutenant in the Field Artillery and in Camp Taylor was a teacher of equitation—and as such taught horseback riding to recruits. It was here that

I learned that a horse can take as much of a "character part" in a story as a human being. Had more to do with horses at Camp Fremont—and in Oklahoma.

Present home is in Los Angeles, California.

That paragraph before the last interests us. We're going to sound Mr. Perkins out on the possibility of filling the *Ask Adventure* niche left vacant by the resignation of Colonel Dupuy, our old cavalry expert.

AND speaking of experts, we are happy to announce that at last we have been able to secure the services of a top-rank man to handle *Ask Adventure* queries on dogs which have had to go unanswered since the death of John B. Thompson (Ozark Ripley) who took care of such inquiries for many years. Dog-lovers the world over will be as delighted as we are to know that Freeman Lloyd has consented to act as our authority on canine matters. Known as the Dean of American dog writers and among his many friends as "The Grand Old Man of Dogdom" he has an international reputation as a leading authority on hunting, field and kennel subjects and to all matters concerning dogs in both hemispheres—above and below the Equator.

Mr. Lloyd has perhaps written more authoritative articles on the practical uses, points, and characteristics of all breeds of dogs, than any other person living. For 24 years he has been Kennel Editor of *Field & Stream*, and during the last 17 years he has never missed a 5,000 word, illustrated contribution to the *American Kennel Gazette*—the official monthly publication of the American Kennel Club—which rules and regulates all matters concerning bench shows, spaniel, and retriever field and water trials, in the United States. He has contributed frequently to the *National Geographic Magazine*.

Since boyhood days in Wales, he has been associated with dogs, hunting, the amenities of country life and its sports.

A remarkable tribute to his abilities as an authority on dogs, was written by Albert Payson Terhune, who said—

To most normal men it is given to like dogs.

Freeman Lloyd

To a few men it is given to understand dogs, more or less well; and to have some historical knowledge concerning the origin of certain breeds. But to perhaps one man in a generation is it given to know dogs and their antecedents and their points, as a Chief Justice is supposed to know the common law. Such a man is Freeman Lloyd.

I know of no other expert who has Lloyd's peculiarly complete equipment of blended education and genius, along all canine lines. Nor did he acquire it by a fluke. With him, dogs are an inspired life-study.

LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH sent us this background material about his novelette, "The Enlistment of Joe Lightning." We thought you'd be interested as we were. He says—

I was in Canton, China on a little flying deal in '37 when the Japs were bombing the city, and on my way home stopped off at Manila, P. I., visiting a few weeks there with an army officer I've known since the last war. During pleasant evenings of yarning with him and other army men this Joe Lightning story began to take form. It took four years to grow up.

Anybody who has been out Pasay road toward Nichols flying field has seen Nipa Bar. Anybody loitering on the bridge near Cuartel de España has seen the identical freight scow that *could* have concealed the *paltiks*. There are *Sakdalistas* in Luzon who employ homemade guns to put zesty problems into the life of the Commonwealth Government; there are dusty, neglected little photographic shops in the San Nicolas Bi-

nondo district whose stocky brown owners grow fat and sleek in some mysterious manner certainly not connected with the infinitesimal business of their shops. . . .

But more important we have tough, efficient sergeants in our army like Joe Lightning, who gets things done with casual, matter-of-fact efficiency. And majors such as Sam Laifort who appreciate those enlisted men and will go through hell-and-high-water for them. Such a combination is unbeatable and one of the reasons why, when the test comes, our army always out-thinks and out-fights any other military on earth.

The non-military person fails to understand this close spirit of mutual respect and co-operation between seasoned enlisted and commissioned personnel. They see non-com stripes, officers' gold braid, saluting and parades, and think such and no more is the U.S. Army. It doesn't shock them then that occasionally this sound balance is disturbed by the introduction of some politically-made officer, such as the Captain Montgomery of my story.

Our army has quite instinctively evolved several methods of self-defense for these cases. One I have illustrated. Another effective method is to forget such a person exists except for his monthly dole from the Q.M. Dept. Most troopers have seen this method in operation. It is quite similar to the defense mechanism of an oyster when some irritating object is introduced into its internal economy. And strangely, as with the oyster, this obnoxious irritant often emerges at a later date, quite colorful but still useless except as an ornament.

Yes, this yarn was a sweet set-up for the writer, even to a Filipino houseboy who generously furnished me with the difficult Tagalog dialect. So I thank him, along with certain officers and men of the good old U.S. Army; that tough, stanch organization of fighters who never yet have failed to dismay the enemy with their peculiar capacity for individual initiative.

Incidentally, and just for the record, the author of "Joe Lightning" has served two hitches as an enlisted man, which included the Mexican trouble and front line service in France with wound and citation and was later an officer and pilot in the U.S. Air Service and has fifteen years as a Reserve Officer of the U.S. Air Corps and a mere 8,000 hours of flying behind him.

ARTIST I. B. Hazelton, who illustrated the Goldsmith story mentioned above, draws the illustrations for Gordon MacCreagh's series of African novelettes in which the piping Scotch ("Scots is the wu-r-r-d, mon") Behemoth,

Artist MacCreagh *Artist Hazelton*

Davie Munro, and his famous stock of uniforms occur. The letter below explains the twin picture above.

St. Petersburg, Fla.

Dear Artist:—

A commendation from a scrivener for a swell job of illustrating "Tarred with the Trader Brush." The Britishers in agony as the Scot pipes is a gem.

Lemme, as a man must on sacred subjects, call your attention to a small sacrilege—

Right hand on pipe chanter, owing to spacing of holes, must cover them with *middle* joints of first three fingers, thus bringing the top joint of little finger in line. Left hand fingertips O.K.

You are now probably the only artist in the world who knows this.

Sincerely,
Gordon MacCreagh

Mr. Hazelton has assured us and the author that the next time he depicts a skirler at his skirling *middle* joints it shall be!

WHEN we printed a plea in the last *Camp-Fire* from the American Committee for the Defense of British Homes for gifts of small arms and ammunition from American civilians to be sent to British civilians, we knew there would be an immediate and wholehearted response. That we didn't guess wrong

is proved by the following communications from Donegan Wiggins and P. H. Glover—*Ask Adventure's* two experts on firearms—which arrived in the same mail to start the ball rolling. This from Phil Glover—

I just sent over an old double-barrelled shotgun which came from England in the beginning. I hope it does as good work there as it always did here. At the present time England, as everyone knows is fighting for her very existence and ours. If she falls it will in all probability be but a question of time before democracy will be but a page in the history of the world.

Hunting as we know it in this country, has not existed in England for centuries. It is a rich man's pastime. The possession and use of fire arms has been so strictly regulated that the average person never did own one and knows nothing of its practical use. In their time of need they are calling on us to send them anything that will shoot, in order that they may protect their lives and those of their families from as merciless a swarm of invaders as the barbarians that destroyed Rome. A great many of us have firearms for which we have no particular use. There never was a time when we could put these to better advantage than by sending them now to the English. They are protecting this civilization of ours, as well as their own, and it seems but a small thing to send our spare firearms. The reader of *Adventure* has seen more of life than the average person and is more accustomed to giving practical help than indulging in maudlin theories. This is a very good time to extend that help. Let us send guns, while others pass resolutions of sympathy.

England is in dire peril now because the possession of firearms was restricted to the few. There is and has been a movement on foot in this country for a number of years to do the same here. Time after time bills have been presented to tax, to license, or to prohibit the ownership of firearms, under the plea that it would keep them out of the hands of the criminal class. The Sullivan law in New York has been in force for years and if it has disarmed one single criminal no one has yet found out who he was. It has kept the respectable citizen from having the means of protecting his own home. That is all a general law would do. The most kindly thing which can be said of the sponsors of these bills is that they are misguided or not in full possession of that God given intellect which in theory at least distinguishes man from the lower animals. A great part of the support of these bills comes from that element which would like to see the law abiding gun owner surrender his firearm, but which has no intention of giving up their own. One man could carry all the arms the nazis, reds or criminals would surrender. What a joyous time this element will have if the rest of us are defenceless. The first step in disarmment will be registration, then taxation, and then confiscation. All this will be done in the name of patriotism. They will say "Register, so that the government will know where the guns are", "Pay your taxes to help the good cause". And finally you will give them up because you have to.

Fight every law, that requires the registration, or taxation of fire arms in every way you can, vote against everyone who supports it for he has shown himself unfit for public office. Do this lest we also be reduced to begging old guns with which to defend our lives, our property and the virtue of our women.

And this from Ol' Man Wiggins of Oregon.

About that matter of arms for England, I've sent some cash from San Francisco direct. Acted literary, and didn't count it, just emptied the pocket at the booth on Treasure Island. Am trying to locate a weapon to send now.

From what I have seen of the use of firearms by native English, I fancy the double barreled shotgun will be the best weapon for him to use in case of invasion. Few of the men from Merrie England that we see here, save exceptions like Charlie Hodson, seem to have any idea of rifle shooting, altho most are good with the scattergun.

Their gunwork will be at close ranges if and when, I believe, and while men who have been in some sort of military units before, or rifle club members, will undoubtedly be armed with the Enfield, I fancy that the majority will have the shotgun, and will do well at ranges of fifty to seventy-five yards. I really believe that, save for rifle-trained men, the shotgun is the thing for invaders.

In closing let us remember this; the armed citizen saved America; maybe he will save England too. *Let's never have any disarming laws passed, to get us into England's present fix.* It takes a lot of intelligent practice to make a rifleman, and even more to make a handgun man.

10 Warren Street, New York City, N.Y. is the address of the Committee. They will forward weapons, ammunition, steel helmets and binoculars to the civilian committee in England. As of February 1st the committee had collected over 5,000 helmets, 2,000 rifles and shotguns, 2,000 pistols, some 225,000 rounds of ammunition, about a thou-

sand pairs of binoculars and more than a hundred stop watches—also badly needed—for timing the speed of raiding planes.

BOB CASE'S serial "Freeze and Be Damned!" which ends in this issue, had barely got under way before we began to get complimentary letters about it. Witness—

Portland, Ore. 1/30/'41

Dear Sir:

In your Feb. issue you give a brief, too brief, sketch of Robert Ormond Case. As we who know and love Bob wish it to be expanded so to speak to its proper proportions, I am writing to say that I think that there is no writer of Alaska tales who so carefully corrects every detail of his stories to conform to the facts as does Bob. I know, for I have spent many years in that region, and I read his stories in a critical manner, as I do all Alaskan stories.

Climatic conditions, distance, direction, habits and customs of the early day sourdough, the colloquialisms used, their drinks and their eats, how and what they fed their dogs, type of sleds used, even the kind of containers in which they carried their liquor. This is the result of intense research, and travel over the ground of which he writes. Personally, Bob is admired by nearly every citizen of Oregon, and so great is his popularity that in the last election in his first adventure in politics, he led a field of popular candidates for School Director, among a population of some quarter million voters. That's how we like Bob.

I suspect that Bob's modesty prevented him from telling you much of the truth about himself. I lived in Alaska during the early days of the Territory, with the Stoney Geodetic expedition 1886 to 1888, and during the gold rush 1896 to 1900, so I speak with authority. We all wish Bob luck and congratulate you on securing his tale for our magazine.

Lee Howard,
7105 North Macrum Ave.,
Portland, Ore.

And—from *Ask Adventure's* expert on Alaska.

May this Sourdough rise and make a few remarks about Alaskan fact and its relation to Alaskan fiction? Yes, that's precisely what I mean—that there isn't always a very close relation between the two!

Beginning with that long ago time when I started learning the Far North by the hard way, and years before I took the job of being Alaska's "expert" for our Ask Adventure pages, I've been watching the yarns about that country with a critical eye. Perhaps I've been too critical. Anyhow, I became pessimistic. Often the fiction writer knew the country well but couldn't get his knowledge over in an interesting way. Sometimes the writing has been excellent, so good in fact as to create a false impression of the author's intimate knowledge of the country and the life. Jack London was the arch exemplar of this. But his genius made his too brief and narrow familiarity with the country of negligible importance. Rex Beach knew his Alaska far better than the average writer. (He and I once slept in the same deserted igloo.) Here again a splendid craftsmanship produced the illusion of a perfect knowledge.

Nine fictionists out of ten, writing of Alaska, consciously or unconsciously misdraw or mispaint the region and its life. You can't blame the editor, unless he happens to be a sourdough. And even then he'd be sorely tempted to feed his readers the conventionalized Alaska they had learned to regard as the real one.

Perusal the other day of the first instalment of Bob Case's serial "Freeze and be Damned!" brought these considerations vividly to mind. Here is a man who is easily a good enough writer to turn the trick of London or Beach in creating in the ordinary reader a very confident sense of complete authenticity, but who can also do the even rarer thing of convincing the experienced Alaskan that the author is strictly of his own fraternity—a hard bitten sourdough of the first water.

I had read Case's *Post* stories with much interest. Their seeming verisimilitude could, however, have been imitative. They contained no acid tests of absolute first hand knowledge. But already in this Alaska serial my skepticism has been "taken for a ride". Literally that—an air ride from Nome over the rock and ice of Brooks Range to the great tundra plain margin of the Arctic Sea. This region—the whole sweep of it—was for years my main stamping ground in the Far North. Except for the Nome corner, it is remote; few know it. Reading the "Case history" in *Campfire* of the same issue, I couldn't see how the man could have squeezed in time and opportunity to acquire the intimate, detailed, in many places technical, knowledge of the region and its sparse and strange life, especially in midwinter, a season during which a mere handful of men on this continent have even seen it. But Case either has done it all or is possessed of an amazing clairvoyance.

This is very annoying, and I'm half minded

to write and tell him so. For he deprives me, as an AA man, of one of the most valued perquisites of the job—the self-arrogated privilege of privately picking flaws and shooting holes in fiction relating to "our" part of the world. That camp of the Brinkleys with its drift wood, its convenient cut bank, its moss roots and the like is all good, authentic stuff written by a man who knows his onions—or moss roots—and if anybody kicks, send 'em along to me!

We're no sourdough and are mighty glad to have such testimony from two men who are that we didn't go astray in arranging to publish "Freeze and Be Damned!"

AND now about that current irritation with L. T. W. we mentioned on Pg. 106. What happened was that we were supposed to drive to Jacksonville with him last Friday, from which point he was to leave us to take his plane for S. A. at Miami, while we went fishing for a week with Howard Bloomfield. The Sunday before we were supposed to leave White telephoned us that he had to leave Tuesday instead of Friday, as we had arranged, and was driving to New Orleans instead of Florida, neither of which we could manage. Otherwise our plans remain unchanged! Do you wonder we're irked?

Here's more from H. B. and the log of the *Kittiwake*.

As you know, my boat is old-fashioned in some respects. I'll keep her so. Being a poor mechanic and with little understanding of engines, this way is better. Our kerosene lights give some heat which is needed at times, and I see others having trouble with generators and wiring. My engine starts with both hands on the flywheel and some heaves of the back, and this keeps me out of difficulty with starters and batteries. Along with being my own winch and windlass and starter, I shed ten pounds or so on the way south. It was all good high-priced editorial lard, too.

We're tied up now for a few weeks in a pleasant little town on the Florida east coast. The beach is handy, and I've taken some pompano out of the surf. I got a twenty-pound kingfish the other day. The full list would be long, and I'm afraid it might spoil your day's work.

We're still envying you, mister, but we want to see some pictures of those fish, with notarized statements attached in re their catching.—K. S. W.

"RILEY GRANNAN'S LAST ADVENTURE"

It is available again. With requests coming in almost every week, although it has not been advertised for years, and with our own supply down to a single copy, ADVENTURE has ordered a large reprint of this famous booklet. The price is ten cents.

This is the classic of funeral sermons—the sermon delivered in a burlesque theater in Rawhide, Nevada, by Herman W. Knickerbocker, the busted preacher-prospector, over the body of Riley Grannan, the dead-broke gambler.

Adventure
205 East 42nd Street
New York, N. Y.

Please send me.....copies of "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure."
I am enclosing.....cents. (10c in stamps or coins for each copy desired.)

.....
Name

.....
Street Address

.....
City or Town State

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THERE are flying marines, but no Marine Air Corps.

Request:—I would greatly appreciate it if you would set me right on the following details:

1. What is the youngest age at which you can join the Marine Air Corps?

2. How does one go about joining, and what are the requirements?

In general I would like to know as much as possible about this branch of the Marine Corps.

—William J. Warren Jr.
1335 Linden Street
Wilmington, Del.

Reply by Maj. F. W. Hopkins:—Replying to your recent letter inquiring about enlistment in the "Marine Air Corps," there is no such separate organization. Marine Corps Aviation is a part of the US Marine Corps and operates under the Bureau of Aeronautics of the Navy Dept. All officers and men, both flying personnel and ground, are members of the line of the regular Marine Corps or of the Marine Corps Reserve on active duty, who have been detailed to duty in that activity. Enlistment in the Marine Corps is for four years, the minimum age is 18. All enlistments are for general duty.

It is possible to join the Marine Corps Reserve for flight training if a graduate or student at certain colleges having naval ROTC units—I have not all of the data at hand, and suggest that you write to Director, Marine Corps Reserve, Headquarters US Marine Corps.

Ask him to send you the requirements for joining the reserve, for active duty involving flying training.

I enclose a folder that may interest you, with some of the information you desire in it.

A CORRECTION: Mr. Victor Shaw, *Ask Adventure's* expert on mining and metallurgy, in a letter published in the pages of our February issue, confused the Fisher Research Laboratory of Palo Alto, Cal., with the Goldak Company of Los Angeles, in mentioning the Metallascope. The Fisher people build the M-Scope, a similar instrument, hold the basic patents and for a two-year period licensed the Goldak Company to build the instrument.

THE following sequence of correspondence, relative to Navajo Mountain and the missing David E. Smith, ties in with all three of our monthly departments—*Lost Trails, Camp-Fire* and *Ask Adventure*. We include it here for convenience, because Mr. C. C. Anderson, who replies to the letter below, even though it was addressed to *Camp-Fire*, is one of our experts and the letter concerns him. There is a notice about Smith in *Lost Trails*.

Now—

January 21, 1941

Gentlemen:

One of the reporters on the local

newspaper has brought to my attention the case of David E. Smith, and the correspondence pertaining to his absence, supposedly missing somewhere in the Navajo Mountain country of Arizona-Utah. This is in the February issue of ADVENTURE.

A man named Smith, but I can't recall the first name at all, wrote me in 1939, either from Chicago, or somewhere in that region. There were three or four letters from this man, all asking questions about Navajo Mountain, and the region about it. I subsequently furnished this Smith a map and considerable information. I advised him, also, against attempting to enter the country alone unless he had had wide experience in the "wilds." This correspondence took place from my Flagstaff (Arizona) residence. I have just lately come here to organize a Chamber of Commerce and handle publicity.

I remember well that the name of my eastern correspondent was Smith, but the David given name doesn't sound at all familiar, and I am a young man and not middle aged yet, as Smith's brother's letter in the Camp-Fire indicates. It could be easily that this Smith and my Smith are two different ones. However, some time the latter part of last July a man called at my home in Flagstaff to see me while I was away. He gave the name Smith. The Smith letters are in my files someplace, at Flagstaff, and I'll make an effort to get up there in a week or ten days and hunt them up.

The principal reason for this letter is that I want to disagree violently with your Ask Adventure expert, Mr. C. C. Anderson.

In his first letter he describes the region as "—that terrible desert of barren rock and shifting sands." There is very little sand there, definitely not enough to be called a "desert" and all of that is mostly windblown into the roads.

In the second letter Mr. Anderson, in describing the timber on Navajo Mountain, says, "This is the only timber for many miles." This statement clearly shows that he has not been to Navajo Mountain. And this is to inform Mr. Anderson that there is juniper (cedar) and pinon all over the country about Navajo Mountain, and other species including willow and oak down in the canyons.

Further along appears this: "For many miles there is not enough vegetation to sustain a goat. The water is all under ground in the sandy bottoms but is found only by those who know." Well, well! Do tell! Thousands of sheep and goats are run all over the Navajo Mountain country, also cattle and horses. Eating rocks? Nope. The grass cover, and the forage is the best to be found in the southwest.

Once more Mr. Anderson says: "Not a single inhabitant in one area for ten thousand square miles . . . including Navajo Mountain. The reason is that it will not sustain life." By this time the people who live around Navajo Mountain—and who read ADVENTURE—ought to be about speechless. Mostly the people living there are Indians, Navajos and Piutes, but there are also whites—traders, their families, and Navajo Service employees. When he claims the Navajo Mountain country is a barren, desert, terrible, malevolent place, he is all wet. Furthermore, some of the "old timers" he mentions as knowing the region thoroughly are most known for not living up to their brags.

Frankly, and without intending any reflection on Mr. Anderson who undoubtedly is trying to do the best he can, it is such stuff as this that brings forth every year wild tales of the horrors of exploring the Navajo Mountain country.

How do I know so much about it? My people built the first road to Navajo Mountain, 1924, 71 miles of it from Tonalea to Rainbow Lodge. Before that, and since, they built almost all the trading posts in that region, and still operate some of them. They made 14 miles of trail to Rainbow Natural Bridge, and thus made it possible for people to see that great natural wonder.

I have been over almost every square yard of that country with but one exception, the upper end of Navajo canyon, but intend to remedy that this summer.

Far from being a place of blazing heat, no water and a terrible place as Mr. Anderson claims, actually there is no more peaceful, well put together spot on earth than the Navajo Mountain country.

I don't mean to say that any greenhorn can walk through it—heaven forbid!—with perfect safety and do as he damn well pleases. Far from it. Many, many people have gone in there and were never heard of again. That dates from the early days to the present time. The last, most famous case was that of Everett Ruess, of which the "Desert" magazine has now brought out the story in book form. Also, within recent years

white men have been murdered in there.

But I still claim that properly equipped, and that doesn't mean much, and with any sense of savvy whatever, a man could spend the most wonderful vacation of his life in there.

Navajo Canyon is the only place not completely unexplored in the Navajo Mountain country. All the rest of it has been touched. But Navajo canyon will be explored this summer. I am taking a party of scientists and photographers through there on a 90-day collecting trip, from the source to the Colorado River.

There are things in the region very, very few people see. And hundreds go over the main trails each year. I can take you to things you wouldn't believe unless you saw them. Dwarf trees, caves, canyons, unknown cacti, mirages, the Land of Marching Giants, the Land of Standing Rocks, little horses, and so on. A long list. Those mentioned above sound commonplace but, as I say, no one would believe the truth if I *described them.* They will have to be viewed. and photographed. And not only that, not even Navajo Service has knowledge of a segment of Navajo life going on in one spot, reaching back without little change for a few centuries.

The region is amazing, astonishing, not to say incredible, but I still maintain if a man enters there and keeps himself together, properly prepared, that he will encounter no trouble whatever. I'll admit if he can't handle himself, then, only a fool will go in without a guide who knows the country. And in that connection there aren't three alive who do know it, although a couple of hundred "old timers" that I know about maintain, each of them, that he is the sole guide who has been over the Navojo Mountain country until he knows it like a book. Beware of them for they are imposters.

Sincerely,
Gladwell (Toney) Richardson
Executive Secretary, Winslow Chamber of Commerce,
Winslow, Arizona

Salt Lake City, Utah
March 2, 1941

Dear Mr. Richardson:

The editor of ADVENTURE sent me your letter, and I read it twice before I convinced myself that you really meant it, when you said, among other things: "Thousands of sheep and goats are run *all over* the Navajo Mountain country, also cattle and horses . . . *the grass cover, and the forage is the best to be found in the southwest* . . . actually there is no more peaceful, *well put together* spot on earth than the Navajo Mountain country. . . ." The italics are mine.

Well, what do you think of this: " . . . sullen rock walls . . . with something about their grim savagery that suggested both the terrible and the grotesque. The ground was burned out or washed bare . . . desolate majesty . . . gaudy desolation... breathless heat. . . ." No, not my words, but those of Theodore Roosevelt. You will find them in his article "Across the Navajo Desert" in "The Outlook" of October 11, 1913, and they describe his approach to Rainbow Bridge. By the way, did you know that he stripped off and swam in the waters running under the Bridge?

See *Rainbow Bridge*, a book by Charles L. Bernheimer, published in 1926 by Doubleday Page & Company, New York. Also look up "Encircling Navajo Mountain" in the "National Geographic" of February, 1923. There are some pretty strong words in that too. Dr. Byron Cummings, director emeritus of the Arizona State Museum, has written numerous pamphlets, describing Rainbow Bridge and the surrounding country. They were written by the dean of southwestern archaeologists, and his language is powerful even though academic. I realize that Dr. Cummings and John Wetherill were together, and one or the other was the first white man ever to see Rainbow Bridge, and that you might not accept either of them as an authority, and that John Wetherill is one of the old timers "most known for not living up to their brags," as you say. Still, one was responsible for getting the other to make the trip, and he wasn't such an old timer then, and furthermore, Charles L. Bernheimer took him as a guide, and another old timer I mentioned, Zeke Johnson, for three trips to Rainbow Bridge in four years. Read the book. You will then understand how, when, and what they found in their explorations. You will also find these old timers favorably mentioned in numerous books and publications by noted explorers and scientists.

Well, the bridge was discovered over thirty years ago, and even Bernheimer's

last trip was in 1924, so I ought to get up to date, because roads have been built and accommodations made available since Wetherill, Johnson, Cummings, Roosevelt, and Bernheimer were there. You ought to subscribe to the magazine "Arizona Highways" or, since you are secretary of a Chamber of Commerce, have the editor put you on his mailing list. "Arizona Highways" is almost as good as the "Desert" magazine, believe it or not. In the July, 1940, issue is a fine article by Irvin S. Cobb, describing his trip to Rainbow Bridge. This will bring us out of the pre-historic past, away from the "old timers" and almost into the modern machine age.

Sure, I know about the road your people built, the 71 miles of it from Tonalea to Rainbow Lodge, and the 14 miles of it to the Bridge, only I thought that last 14 miles was still a trail. But I will say nothing about the road, simply quote from Mr. Cobb's article.

"Fourten years ago," says Mr. Cobb, (you said in 1924, so we are still in the machine age), "with the aid of Navajos who scouted the most feasible route for him, Hubert Richardson, the trader at Cameron, laid out the short cut, the one followed. It's no boulevard, you understand. Not dangerous, either, but the car that makes the run must be part antelope and part roller coaster. The motives of Mr. Richardson were not altogether altruistic and yet, I'd say, not altogether selfish. To be sure he hoped —still hopes, I guess—to make the undertaking pay. He maintains the automobile connections in from civilization, and he owns and operates Rainbow Lodge at the limits of vehicular travel, and for a price he provides the hardy soul who has adventured thus far with guidance and equipment for the last fourteen-mile stretch, only it doesn't stretch; it twists and it winds by mule-pack down off most lofty inclines to the spot where the Bridge is . . .

". . . we rode in that machine which had a bounding chamois for its mother. Sometimes we scooted through thickets of nut-pine and juniper but mostly we inched along a narrowed rocky spine which rears up a mile and better above sea level to separate Navajo Canyon from Piute Canyon, both being formidable sisters to Grand Canyon. There were periods, as we traversed that crooked spinal column of the divide, when we could look down, this side, into the convoluted mysteries of Piute and, that side, across a breathtaking void upon the even more daunting panorama of Navajo, which is an experience not exactly to be duplicated anywhere else so far as I know, and this subscriber has been about quite a bit, off the beaten track, hither and yon."

Mr. Cobb is not an authority on grazing or Indians, but he continues: "To the swales between Piute's bare ribs some of the Indians come with their flocks for shelter in the winter but mighty few of them hibernate in Navajo because Navajo is where ghosts of the 'Other People' abide and the head-devils of the tribal demonology talk back and forth in the haunted night-time. In the lower recesses of Navajo Canyon are said to be two hundred separate ruins of the cliff-dwellers—probably more than that since the bewildering multiplicity of these rugged wall-pockets forbids a complete census . . .

"It was at the Lodge perched well up on the front of Navajo Mountain, that we arrived in the cool of a flawless evening, so finishing the first extended lap of the expedition. Most mountains here occur in groups, like clutches of mottled eggs, but this giantess—she lacks a little of being ten thousand and five hundred feet tall—as viewed from the southerly approach, soars up all by herself out of a comparatively flattish tableland straddling the state line between Utah and Arizona. On her haunches and behind her, toward the north, is where the girdling slopes jag off into one enormous oblong; an olympian commingling of terrifying sheer drops and distorted upheavals and all manner of cavernous holes and corridors—perhaps the roughest, wildest, most disordered conglomeration in a territory which nowhere and never is what you would exactly call docile."

There's a lot more of it. He even uses some of those words, or their cousins, that I used. Now, don't get sore and write to Mr. Cobb, or the publisher (Arizona Highways) and tell them that "the principal reason for your letter is that you want to disagree violently with their expert," as you did here. You see, Mr. Cobb is a humorist; he might have been kidding all of us; but when you read his entire article, he seems sincere when he talks about the road your folks built, and he doesn't seem to have the impression you have of the country, or that it is "well put together." Then, of course, we're only guessing, but Mr. Cobb might have thought that when he was charged $30 for the pack-trip from

the Lodge to the Bridge and return, 28 miles, that he owed somebody—something.

I don't know how many sheep, goats, cattle or horses are run "all over" Navajo Mountain, but I presume they would have to run all over to get enough to eat if there were very many of them. Mr. Cobb stated that the Indians came there only in the winter for shelter for their animals. I cannot, in Salt Lake, get the figures, but Mr. Hugh M. Bryan, Range Examiner, U. S. Grazing Service, said: "We have no jurisdiction over the country south of the river, it's Indian Reservation, but if there are any whites in there with stock they are in trespass."

From the office of Indian Affairs, Federal Building, Salt Lake City, I find that their January 1, 1939 census showed only 806 Navajos and 4 Piutes living in Utah. That means west from the Colorado line to where the Colorado River crosses the Arizona line, north of the Arizona line and south of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers. That is mighty few Indians for such a large area. They are allowed to live certain places, you know, depending upon the acreages necessary to support the few head of sheep, goats and horses they have, so since Navajo Mountain is only the smallest, least-populated corner, I don't imagine there are actually many Indians there.

Mr. Ray Walker, Soil Conservation Service, Salt Lake City, was district manager during the survey of Navajo Mountain and vicinity, started in 1935. Mr. D. F. Trussel and Mr. C. W. Zumwalt, both also now in Salt Lake, worked at various times on this range survey. Having spent considerable time there, they say their impression is that there were very few Indians, and that no large numbers of stock grazed there, even in season. On February 26, 1941, Mr. Walker said: "A large part of the Navajo Mountain area will not support anything, although there are isolated spots that produce enough forage to permit of some grazing. To the north and east of the mountain, down to the river, 50 per cent of the land is bare, red, sandstone rock. The vegetation is better to the south and east of the mountain and there is fair forage on the mountain itself. The timber on the mountain is just a pencil point on the map, but there are pinons and juniper scattered all over."

You may be sure that the Soil Conservation Service would not have started this survey, one of the earliest, had the area not been a critical one because of scant forage and erosion. Vegetation type maps are available, and the report of the range survey from Mr. E. R. Fryer, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Window Rock, Arizona. If you will go over them (I have not done so, but only talked to some of the men who made the survey), I am sure that you will no longer think that area is some of the best grazing land to be found in the southwest. I quote from U. S. Geological Survey Bulletin 865, pp. 12-18, "The Geology of the Monument Valley—Navajo Mountain Region, San Juan County, Utah," as follows: ". . . the vegetation shows that the climate is more humid on the mountain than elsewhere in the region, and storms occur more often on the high peak of the mountain than in the surrounding country. Much of the rainfall takes place in small areas during short thunderstorms. It sometimes happens that one locality receives more than average rainfall, owing to a succession of storms, while another locality not more than 5 or 10 miles distant is suffering from a drought. Owing to the torrential character of the rainfall and the abundance of bare rock surface, with consequent rapid run-off, most storms anywhere in the drainage basin of a creek will produce floods capable of considerable damage to property.

"The vegetation is that which is typical of a large area in southeastern Utah and parts of adjacent States. Scattered cottonwoods are present in the lowlands along the stream courses, but in general the lowlands are bare of trees. Sagebrush, blackbrush, greasewood, rabbitbrush, shadscale, yucca, and numerous varieties of cactus are common. Grass is not abundant, but with the browse it affords a moderate amount of grazing for horses, sheep and cattle. Juniper and pinon are abundant on the uplands of Nokai Creek, and a sparse growth is present on Douglas Mesa and other high land in the eastern part of the region. Yellow pine and some spruce grow on Navajo Mountain."

There is your vegetation. And remember that it covers Monument Valley as well as Navajo Mountain. You, living as you do in a cattle country, cannot help but know that any of the browse mentioned above can be used only for winter grazing.

I made a mistake when I said the

(Continued on page 118)

DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A strange man in Los Angeles, known as "The Voice of Two Worlds," tells of astonishing experiences in far-off and mysterious Tibet, often called the land of miracles by the few travelers permitted to visit it. Here he lived among the lamas, mystic priests of the temple. "In your previous lifetime," a very old lama told him, "you lived here, a lama in this temple. You and I were boys together. I lived on, but you died in youth, and were reborn in England. I have been expecting your return."

The young Englishman was amazed as he looked around the temple where he was believed to have lived and died. It seemed uncannily familiar, he appeared to know every nook and corner of it, yet—at least in this lifetime—he had never been there before. And mysterious was the set of circumstances that had brought him. Could it be a case of reincarnation, that strange belief of the East that souls return to earth again and again, living many lifetimes?

Because of their belief that he had formerly been a lama in the temple, the lamas welcomed the young man with open arms and taught him rare mysteries and long-hidden practices, closely guarded for three thousand years by the sages, which have enabled many to perform amazing feats. He says that the system often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, can be used to achieve brilliant business and professional success as well as great happiness. The young man himself later became a noted explorer and geographer, a successful publisher of maps and atlases of the Far East, used throughout the world.

"There is in all men a sleeping giant of mindpower," he says. "When awakened, it can make man capable of surprising feats, from the prolonging of youth to success in many other worthy endeavors." The system is said by many to promote improvement in health; others tell of increased bodily strength, courage and poise.

"The time has come for this long-hidden system to be disclosed to the Western world," declares the author, and offers to send his amazing 9000 word treatise—which reveals many startling results—to sincere readers of this publication, free of cost or obligation. For your free copy, address the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 304N, Los Angeles, Calif. Readers are urged to write promptly, as only a limited number of the free treatises have been printed.

(Continued from page 116)

"uninhabited area" included Navajo Mountain. I should have said, "excluding the mountain." Just to show you how easy it is to make these mistakes: Your letter, page 4: "Navajo Canyon is the only place not completely unexplored in the Navajo Mountain country. All the rest of it has been touched." Now I know you didn't mean that and it is obvious that the second sentence contradicts the first. But your next sentence shows that it was a simple mistake because you say you are taking a party there next summer.

Here is the dope on that unexplored area in Utah. Verification can be obtained from the U. S. Grazing Service, lands section, Federal Bldg., Salt Lake City. North from the Arizona line, and north of the San Juan and Colorado Rivers, through Kane, Garfield, Wayne and part of Emery counties, and south through part of Grand and San Juan counties, to the San Juan River, is an area of 11,500 square miles, or 7,360,000 acres. It is as large as the combined areas of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, and almost one-half of New Jersey, with their total population of 4,553,000 people. This area has only four ranches and the ranchers usually go to some outlying town for the winter. In this whole area there is: no town, no store, no school, no church, no gas station, no telephone, no electric light, and no modern bathroom, nor any other items so familiar and essential to everyday life. There is less than 80 miles of unimproved dirt roads, only 30 miles of wagon roads, and 30 per cent of the area is surveyed.

Does that sound like it would sustain life? I did not mean that cattle or other stock could not be grazed there, or that cowpunchers didn't ride into the country once or twice a year. But I meant that it would not sustain life because usually water, and grain for horses, has to be packed in, no crops can be produced and even to round up a bunch of cattle means that while in the area men are living at an economical loss, except of course, for the value of the stock being produced. To me a desert need not be flat—Sahara style. It seems perfectly natural to me to classify Navajo Mountain and vicinity as a desert because of the scant rainfall and the desert type of vegetation. To me pinon and junipers are not timber, either. The Grazing Service classes them as "protective growth for forage plants" and to me, and a lot of others I'll bet, they mean firewood and fence posts, not timber. They are indicators of the upper Sonoran plant-life zone, but often overlap into the Transition zone. Latitude and altitude very often cause them to be found where they are not expected, according to the accepted zones as established by Merriam primarily on temperature. In other parts of your letter you mentioned "dwarf trees" — you didn't call them timber.

Dr. A. L. Inglesby, Fruita, Utah, has been to Rainbow Bridge three times. He has been up and down the Colorado River, from Hite to Lee's Ferry, four times. He took an active part in the last Julius Stone trip, which was written up with color photos in the Saturday Evening Post, about April, 1938. He took Doctor Frazier down, and the next year Admiral Byrd took Dr. Frazier to Antartica. I had lunch with "Doc" the other day and let him read a copy of my letters (which were published in part) and your letter. I took notes and will give them, in part, and all cuss words carefully toned down, if you will not get sore.

"I can pick holes in your letter (Anderson) and if I wanted to sit down and go over it I could pick his (Richardson) all to pieces. By God, there *isn't* enough vegetation to sustain a goat for miles and miles, except of course in some spots. There are goats and livestock on the mountain, but they are scattered out to graze and the Indians who graze them know that country and how to handle them. It *is* a tough country, tougher than hell. You know there is a stream running under the Bridge in Aztec Canyon, but as a general thing, over the whole area, there is no water, and a man has *got* to know those watering places. He doesn't learn it in a hurry either; it takes from 25 to 50 years to learn it.

"Here, Richardson tips his hand, and he does it more than once. Sure, if a man is properly equipped he *can* spend a pleasant vacation there. Hell's fire! If I was properly equipped I could spend a pleasant vacation in Antartica or at the North Pole! I sent a party down there, mostly Boy Scouts, in 1938. They were big fellows, almost men and nearly every one of them bigger than I am. They didn't have much money and wanted to walk from the Lodge to the Bridge. They told me about other tough hikes they had made and proved it by

(Continued on page 120)

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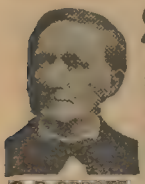

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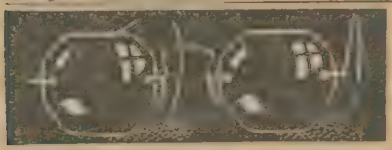

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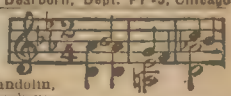

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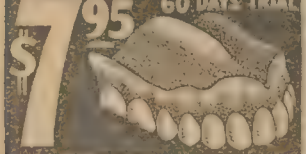

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(Continued from page 118)

pictures so I told them to go ahead. They had to turn back, never made the 14 miles to the Bridge and never even saw it.

"And that "Desert" magazine article, and the book too, I guess, is ridiculous. Neil Johnson wrote it; I know him and know where he lived for years. And anyway, I don't see why Richardson even brought it up. Ruess was lost between Escalante and the north of the Colorado River. That's a good long way from Navajo Mountain. Ruess was supposed to be painting pictures, and he was never found, but his burros were. If anybody can tell me why Indians would kill a man for his food and equipment when he didn't have over $2 worth, I'll put in with you. I know the man who sold Ruess his outfit, and Ruess went into that country with a very poor inadequate outfit and no knowledge of the country."

Then "Doc" Inglesby laughed, and said, "Oh, well, he is entitled to his opinion. After all, he has something to sell, and maybe when you think about it Navajo Mountain *is* a paradise when compared to some of that Winslow country and the Meteor Crater. Now look, *if* the Smith who wrote to Richardson and to whom Richardson gave maps and information is the Smith who is missing, did Richardson think of that? Hell's fire! If Smith had written to you, Andy, and you had scared him a little, or impressed him at least, maybe he wouldn't be missing. That is, if you're both talking about the same man."

I stated in my letter that the "old timer" mentioned in David Smith's letter as the man his lost brother Donald wanted to see, might be "Uncle Billy" Crosby. He lives at Jacob's Lake and is the grandson of Jacob Hamblin, the famous Mormon scout, pioneer and missionary to the Indians. "Billy" was riding with his noted father in that country when he was 9 years old. He's now in his seventies.

No, I haven't been over almost "every square yard of that country" as you have, or over every square yard of any other country. But I have been around in Utah and Arizona for twenty years, and in 1940 I spent several months interviewing men living near that country. In my note books I have six who, when asked about things to be found in that, and adjacent areas, showed a similarity in their answers: "There is just

too much country there for me to say that I know it; there's thousands of acres I've never seen. I've put cattle in that were never seen again and probably died of old age because nobody could ride to where they got. I've only been riding in that country (for from 30 to 50 years) and it takes more than one lifetime to even get acquainted with it."

I've had my copy—for publication (and these "Ask Adventure" letters are not written for publication, but in response to requests for information and help), approved by the Supervisor of Southwestern National Monuments, the National Park Service, the Grazing Service, the Forest Service, the Utah State Agricultural College, the U. S. Travel Bureau, and the general Church offices. But that doesn't mean I might not have made mistakes and can't make them in the future. Yes, an essay on Rainbow Bridge was approved, too.

Now in the first part of your letter you cussed hell out of me for being ignorant, and in the last part of it you came right over on my side and agreed with me, even emphasized my statements. All we are arguing about is our individual interpretation of words and terms. We are on opposite sides of a fence, but hell, I can reach across that fence to shake hands, if you want to, and then maybe we can get together and find out something about the lost Donald Smith. Won't you write me—starting with a clean slate, both of us—and advise me what you have found out about the man named Smith who called at your home in Flagstaff last July, while you were away. I've put in quite a bit of time and effort on this case, and his folks seem to be real people. Your statement is the first news that might be from him. Let's see if we can't help his folks learn his whereabouts.

Sincerely,
C. C. Anderson

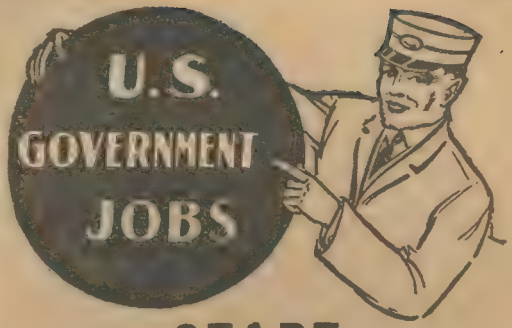
We appreciate Mr. Richardson's interest, we have great confidence in Mr. Anderson's familiarity with the territory about which he experts, and agree with both gentlemen that the most important thing is to find the vanished Mr. Smith!

LOST TRAILS

(Continued from page 6)

here. My mail address: Charles A. Miller, 847—4 Ave., Allegheny County, Verona, Pa.

(Continued on page 127)



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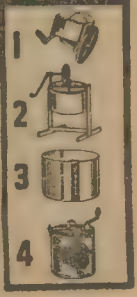

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29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.15
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(Continued on page 123)

(Continued from page 122)

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(Continued on page 126)

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(Continued from page 123)

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LOST TRAILS

(Continued from page 121)

Oscar Staiber, gym instructor, last seen in Oakland, early part of 1935. Please write Geier, 1065 Aileen, Oakland, Calif., or, F. P. Soen, 144 Congress St., Jersey City, N. J.

J. M. (Joseph Marchand) Hall [illegible] football player and engineering student at South Dakota State College in 1907-08. Owned a machine shop in Morgan, Colorado, in 1909 and was a construction superintendent for a contracting firm in 1910. He was my friend, partner, and hero during these years and I will reward the reader who gives me his present address.—W. H. McCullough, 916 Building, Yakima, Washington.

February 24, 1941

I want to thank you for running the paragraph in regard to J. M. Hall in your "Lost Trails" section of the magazine.

Last week a man in Niagara Falls read this article and sent it to his friend, J. M. Hall in or near Chicago and Mr. Hall immediately wrote to me.

Thanking you again for this favor, I am,

Yours sincerely,

W. H. McCullough

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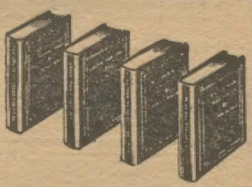

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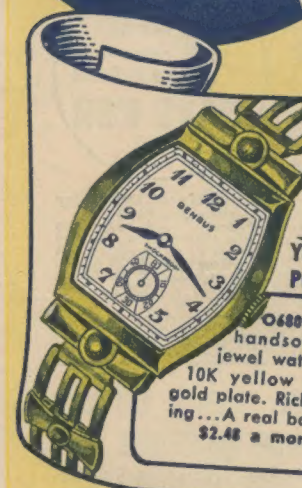

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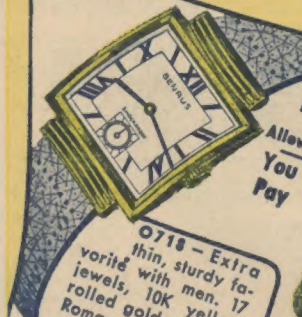

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